未踏召喚：ブラッドサイン

The unexplored summon://blood-sign.V

5

鎌池和馬
イラスト：依河和希

電撃文庫

Table of Contents

Illustrations
Battle Tutorial
Prologue
Facts
Opening X-01: A Stage Play Called a Miniature Garden
Facts
Opening X-02: Peel Back the Outer Layer to Reveal Another
Facts
Stage 01: Named Summoners, the 15 Children
Part 1
Part 2
Part 3
Part 4
Part 5
Part 6
Part 7
Part 8
Part 9
Part 10
Part 11
Part 12
A Happy Memory from an Unknown Point on the Timeline 1
Facts
Stage 02: A Certain Boy’s Warm Days, Both Sides
Part 1
Part 2
Part 3
Part 4
Part 5
Part 6
Part 7
Part 8
Part 9
Part 10
Part 11
A Happy Memory from an Unknown Point on the Timeline 2

Facts
Stage 03: The Door to Hell, Who Will Unlock It?
Part 1
Part 2
Part 3
Part 4
Part 5
Part 6
Part 7
Part 8
Part 9
Part 10
Part 11
A Happy Memory from an Unknown Point on the Timeline 3
Facts
Stage 04: The Calamity was Named, the Secret War
Part 1
Part 2
Part 3
Part 4
Part 5
A Happy Memory from an Unknown Point on the Timeline 4
Facts
Ending X-01: A Single Soul that Survived
Facts
Ending X-02: The Demon’s Contract Leads to a Starting Point
Facts
Afterword
?
Credits

Mitou Shoukan://Blood-Sign — Volume 05

未踏召喚：ブラッドサイン

鎌池和馬
イラスト：依河和希
デザイン：渡邊宏一（ニイナナイゴオ）

contents

015 オープニングX-01
箱庭という名の演劇舞台

031 オープニングX-02
一皮剥けば奥にもう一つ

041 ステージ01
ネームドサマナー、一五の子ら

145 ステージ02
ある少年の温かい日々、表と裏

215 ステージ03
地獄の扉、錠前を外すのは誰か

269 ステージ04
災厄はこう呼ばれた、秘匿大戦

319 エンディングX-01
生き残った一人分の魂魄

323 エンディングX-02
突破口に至る悪魔の契約

CONTENTS

- Illustrations
- Battle Tutorial
- Prologue
- Opening X-01: A Stage Play Called a Miniature Garden
- Opening X-02: Peel Back the Outer Layer to Reveal Another
- Stage 01: Named Summoners, the 15 Children
- Stage 02: A Certain Boy’s Warm Days, Both Sides
- Stage 03: The Door to Hell, Who Will Unlock It?
- Stage 04: The Calamity was Named, the Secret War
- Ending X-01: A Single Soul that Survived
- Ending X-02: The Demon’s Contract Leads to a Starting Point
- Afterword
- ?
- Credits

未踏召喚：ブラッドサイン
The unexplored summon: blood sign V
5
鎌池和馬
イラスト：依河和希
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未踏召喚://ブラッドサイン 5

鎌池和馬 イラスト†依河和希

城山恭介【しろやま・きょうすけ】
のちに当代最強の召喚師となる少年。
その圧倒的な実力は幼少期から健在。
与えられたカードの配役は『案内人のウサギ』。

城山京美【しろやま・きょうみ】
カードの配役は『ハートの女王』。
大丈夫？恭介ちゃん
かわりにお姉ちゃんが解いてあげましょうか
ホント恭介には極刑モノで甘いわよねあなた
問題ないよ
キュッ キュッ
これでいいですか？
大正解
まだ10歳なのに凄いわ恭介くん
私があなたに授業をする意味なんてあるのかしら？
――さすが
……『一五兄弟姉妹計画』に選ばれただけあるわね
イエーイ!!!
ビヨンデッタ
カードの配役は『チェシャ猫』。

『一五兄弟姉妹計画』
それは様々な人種民族を
ひとつの屋根のもとに入れ
本物の家族となっていく
『最短最速ルート』を割り出し
拡大解釈することで
70億人の争いを未然に食い止める
大仰なプロジェクト

アルベルト
カードの配役は『帽子屋』。
この計画が
遂行されなければ
ならない 真の理由
何見てんだよ
それは現世と異界
双方のバランスを崩し
無尽蔵の混乱と悲劇を
生み出す災禍の核を
完全に殺すため――

そして

召喚される

神々の奥に潜む存在――

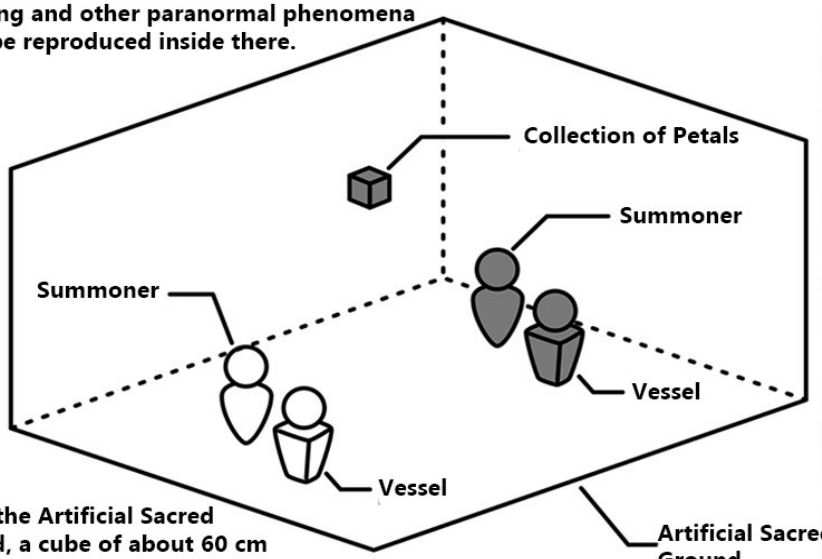
約束して
『××××』
もう誰も
殺さないって

Battle Tutorial

The Summoning Battle begins when one of the summoners uses an Incense Grenade.

phase 1

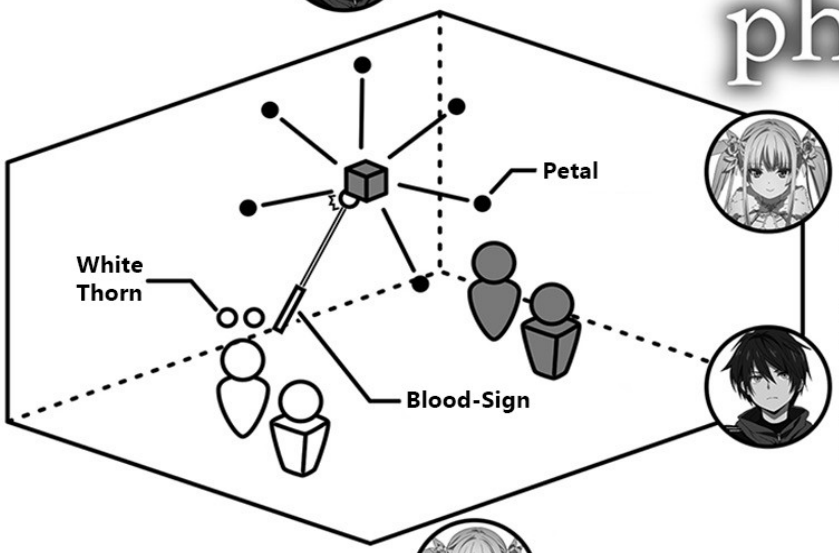
When the Incense Grenade is used, an Artificial Sacred Ground forms around them. Summoning and other paranormal phenomena can only be reproduced inside there.



Inside the Artificial Sacred Ground, a cube of about 60 cm appears at the midpoint between the summoners.

It is a collection of the 216 Petals which are red spheres about the size of an apple.

phase 2



3 white spheres known as White Thorns appear with each summoner. Those are hit with a long staff known as a Blood-Sign and they collide with the Petals.

You hit the Petals with the White Thorns in order to knock them into the spherical Spots that appear in 36 locations inside the Artificial Sacred Ground.

What Petals are hit into the Spots changes what can be summoned.

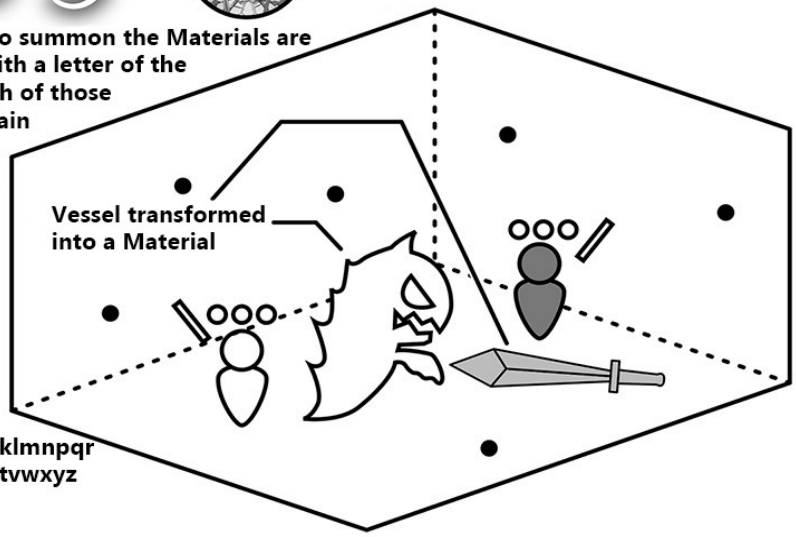
And the vessel's body is used to create...

Battle Tutorial of "The unexplored summon://blood-sign"

phase 3

...a Material. The summoners use them for a fight to the death.

The Petals used to summon the Materials are each engraved with a letter of the alphabet and each of those belongs to a certain Sound Range.



aiueo are vowels and thus the Lowest Sound Range. As for the consonants, bcdfghj are Low, klmnpqr are Middle, and stvwxyz are High.

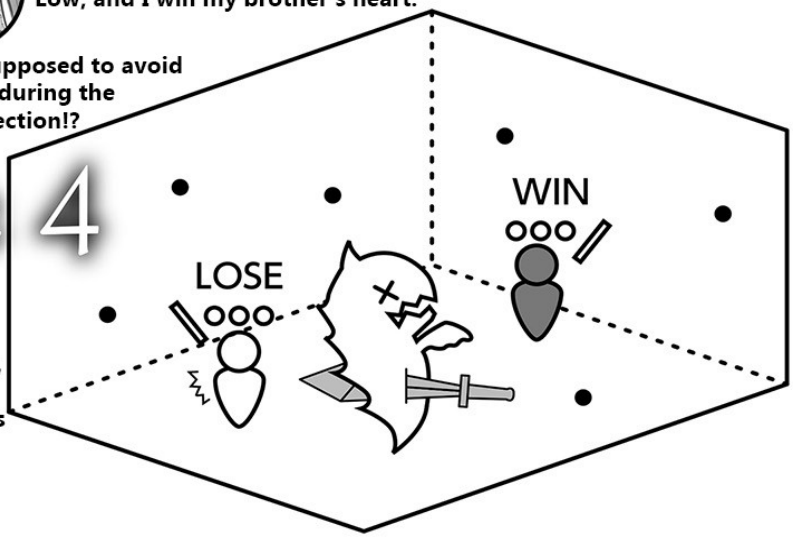
There are of course rules governing the summoned Materials and they are based on the Petals' rules.

Low wins against High, High wins against Middle, Middle wins against Low, and I win my brother's heart.

Weren't we supposed to avoid making jokes during the explanation section!?

phase 4

And after the vessels transform into Materials, they continued to be updated into new forms as they fight.



The Materials start at Regulation-class. After summoning 100 of those, you gain the right to summon the higher Divine-class. And after summoning 50 of those, you gain the right to summon the even higher Unexplored-class.

The vessel has a core known as their Silhouette. If that is destroyed, the battle ends. The losing summoner and vessel will become dolls that wander around in a stupor.

And that concludes our simple explanation of the Summoning Battle. As a summoner fights more and more battles, they earn more titles known as Awards. And if their number of Awards reaches 1000...hee hee hee. Now, I wonder what happens then.

Phase 1
Upper Cube: Collection of Petals
Left Dark Figure: Summoner
Right Dark Figure: Vessel
Left White Figure: Summoner
Right White Figure: Vessel
Overall Box: Artificial Sacred Ground

K: The Summoning Battle begins when one of the summoners uses an Incense Grenade.
Q: When the Incense Grenade is used, an Artificial Sacred Ground forms around them. Summoning and other paranormal phenomena can only be reproduced inside there.
Q: Inside the Artificial Sacred Ground, a cube of about 60 cm appears at the midpoint between the summoners.
K: It is a collection of the 216 Petals which are red spheres about the size of an apple.

Phase 2
Dark Ball: Petal
White Ball: White Thorn
White Stick: Blood-Sign

Q: 3 white spheres known as White Thorns appear with each summoner. Those are hit with a long staff known as a Blood-Sign and they collide with the Petals.
K: You hit the Petals with the White Thorns in order to knock them into the spherical Spots that appear in 36 locations inside the Artificial Sacred Ground.
Q: What Petals are hit into the Spots changes what can be summoned.
K: And the vessel's body is used to create…

Phase 3
White Monster and Dark Sword: Vessel transformed into a Material

Q: …a Material. The summoners use them for a fight to the death.
K: The Petals used to summon the Materials are each engraved with a letter of the alphabet and each of those belongs to a certain Sound Range.
Q: aiueo are vowels and thus the Lowest Sound Range. As for the consonants, bcdfghj are Low, klmnpqr are Middle, and stvwxyz are High.

K: There are of course rules governing the summoned Materials and they are based on the Petals' rules.
Q: Low wins against High, High wins against Middle, Middle wins against Low, and I win my brother's heart.
K: Weren't we supposed to avoid making jokes during the explanation section!?

Phase 4
K: And after the vessels transform into Materials, they continued to be updated into new forms as they fight.
Q: The Materials start at Regulation-class. After summoning 100 of those, you gain the right to summon the higher Divine-class. And after summoning 50 of those, you gain the right to summon the even higher Unexplored-class.
K: The vessel has a core known as their Silhouette. If that is destroyed, the battle ends. The losing summoner and vessel will become dolls that wander around in a stupor.
Q: And that concludes our simple explanation of the Summoning Battle. As a summoner fights more and more battles, they earn more titles known as Awards. And if their number of Awards reaches 1000…hee hee hee. Now, I wonder what happens then.

Prologue

Just as memories and records are different, what is remembered and actual history are not the same.
In the constant struggle against decay, mud is added to the wall to fill in the details while maintaining the original structure. This creates changes that often gloss over the negatives. Those changes accumulate bit by bit. Even if two people who shared the exact same past compare their experiences, it is no use. In fact, the human mind is easily swayed toward group psychology, so their memories lose accuracy even faster then. Just as people can be so drawn in by their impression of a convenience store robber's knit hat that they say they do not remember what the robber looked like despite having a knife pointed right at them. And humans are quite dense when it comes to a convenient sense that something isn't quite right. Brother, you know that quite well after seeing the silly worshippers rolling around in my palm, don't you?
For example, when you recall the past, you are not actually diving back into that era. The hands of the clock continue to move in the present even as you reminisce. They move ever forward.
That is the truth of this story.
Now, brother, let us lament that lost time. And let us move forward even as you check over each item on the list.
Looking back is boring.
I know my brother will not come to a stop while indulging in the past.
What happened at that time and in that place?
What change will occur in you in the present as you ponder that information?
This is a thoroughly destroyed story that no longer exists as a book or as electronic data. And it is also a phenomenon related to the very foundation of the current world.
Now.
Let us discuss that bygone era of the Secret War.

Facts

- Recall the past. But as you do, time in reality continues ever toward the future.

Opening X-01: A Stage Play Called a Miniature Garden

“I’m the big sister, so, um, what was your name?”
“Shiroyama Kyousuke.”
(Opening X-01 Open 09/16 13:00 “Before the War”)
A Stage Play Called a Miniature Garden

You are given just one mission.
Make the world a better place. That is all.

The space was too large to believe it was located 500 meters underground. The floor space rivalled that of a school gym and the ceiling was very, very tall. The floor was covered in white and red panels laid out in the checkerboard pattern of a chess board. The highly ordered rows had a dizzying effect. Countless halogen lights left the circular space as bright as midday and 15 children were gathered there.
The youngest was about 7 and the oldest about 18.
They all wore thin green surgical gowns and the adults called them specimens.
A beautiful woman wore a lab coat and tight skirt and had her long black hair held in a ponytail by a scrunchie. She was shuffling a deck of cards with a practiced hand, but they were not playing cards. Each of the 15 children drew whichever card they wanted and that determined their role and their destiny.
Shiroyama Kyousuke was the Guide Rabbit.
Alberto S. Divinesmith was the Hatter.
Shiroyama Kyoumi was the Queen of Hearts.
Biondetta Shiroyama was the Cheshire Cat.
…
…
…
A boy of about 10 looked at the card in his hand. He had short black hair and eyes so unemotional they seemed mechanical. He swept his gaze across the image on the card and carefully analyzed everything from the color scheme to the curving lines.

His name was Shiroyama Kyousuke.
A girl innocently spoke to him from the side.
“Hey, hey.”
She had flowing blonde hair and white skin. She was probably slightly older than him. She wore the surgical gown like a miniskirt dress without any underwear, so the bright skin glimpsed near the knot at the side was a tempting sight indeed.
“What character did you get? I’m the Cheshire Cat! But what kind of story is Alice in Wonderland? That really is something where you recognize the title but you’ve never actually read it, isn’t it?”
That may have been true. For your average person, anyway.
But Kyousuke, who wore a surgical gown that included pants, kept his eyes on his card. It was not that he was not looking at anything. In fact, the adjustments to the dilation of his eyes were strangely systematic.
And Kyousuke simply stated his honest impression.
“I am the Guide Rabbit. What about it?”
“Cheh. You’re no fun.”
She must not have liked that reaction because the girl waved the Cheshire Cat card around and pouted her lips.
“Ahh, ahh. Maybe I chose the wrong person to talk to.”
He made a “correction”.
And he spoke.
“Alice is too long for a picture book and is as simple and easy to understand as Cinderella.”
“Yeah, that’s more like it.”
The girl, Biondetta, looked around, so Kyousuke did the same and observed the circular space larger than a gym. 15 children had been chosen from around the world. Only extreme problem children had been selected. But being placed in the same circumstances did not seem to build a sense of camaraderie between them. They were already separating out into a few small groups. One was wandering around all alone.
Psychology used the terms Eros and Thanatos.
Humans would gather together all on their own to a certain extent, but once their numbers grew too large, groups tended to split off and act separately. The power binding them together was Eros and the one pushing them apart was Thanatos. As long as this existed, mankind could never be one. People could only gather together in the “world” they knew and they did not try to go beyond that. If they were forced into a single space, they would naturally split back apart into a more manageable size.
This Miniature Garden located 500 meters underground was meant to face that very hurdle.
This was the Fifteen Siblings Project. Was it Government that it belonged to?

Someone clapped their hands twice. It was the previous woman with a black ponytail who wore a lab coat and tight skirt. She wore a whistle around her neck and the ID card on her chest said Shigara Masami.
She was also known as Madam Professor.
She was a developer well versed in the Third Summoning Ceremony and the Blood-Sign method.
“Okay, okay! Do you understand your roles now? Starting today, you all are to live here as those roles. Our goal is to be one family and one planet! By creating a single framework out of these 15 who were gathered from around the world, we will have achieved a system which can be expanded to bring the entire human population into the same framework! Through your experiment, we can remove all conflict and disaster from the world. Let’s work together for a better future!!”
Biondetta responded to the grand speech by sticking out her tongue.
But she had no intention of standing out as she rebelled, so she only whispered in Kyousuke’s ear.
“Bleh. They bought and stole kids from around the world and they think they’re the saviors of mankind? If they want world peace, why don’t they go off and die first of all?”
Despite what she said, she was already standing right next to Kyousuke and viewing the adults as the enemies. Even though she had said he was no fun and wondered if she had chosen the wrong person to talk to.
If the first stage of the project was to bring the 15 children together as a single family, did that mean she was already doing exactly what the adults wanted?
Meanwhile, Shigara Masami continued her speech.
“Barring the unforeseen, we will not interfere in your lives. Please live as you like and produce whatever results you like. Whether this succeeds or fails, it will help the human race in the long run!”
They seemed to take her at her word.
The lone wolf of the 15 wandered out of the circular space and that broke the implicit understanding that they had to continue listening to this like it was the principal speaking at an assembly. Still broken into small groups, the rest of them left a bit at a time.
Shigara Masami’s voice continued to cling to the back of Kyousuke’s surgical gown.
“Okay, everyone!! Have a good life!!”
“Shut up,” said Biondetta under her breath.
Kyousuke tilted his head and asked a question.
“Why are you going with me?”
“Because I’m your big sister! I’m older! Call me Detta.”
The blonde girl puffed her chest out proudly, but she seemed to be showing the effects more strongly than anyone. Everything she said was belied by how quickly she was coaxed into the adults’ plan.
“I’m the big sister, so, um, what was your name?”

“Shiroyama Kyousuke.”
“Kyousuke-chan! Anyway, I need to look after you. Because I’m your big sister!”
When people were placed inside a set space with limited exits and a unified set of values, whether it was a prison or a military base, their psychology was easily adjusted and unified. That was why the headquarters of a cult were almost always wrapped in a veil of the mystical and refused contact with anyone from outside. The easiest form of brainwashing did not require any fancy drugs or pendulum hypnotism.
Incidentally, closed systems like this could be found anywhere.
For example, a family or a school.
“Kyousuke-chan, have you gone around to check out all the rooms in the Miniature Garden?”
He shook his head.
“I haven’t ‘gone around’ and checked them out.”
“Heh heh! Heh heh!! Then I’ll show you around so you won’t get lost!”
Biondetta raised a skinny finger. “This Miniature Garden is a giant facility located 500 meters underground. There are three overall sections. There’s the Mock Battlefield in the center we just left and passageways spread out from there like a spider web. The Inner Circle is the living space and private rooms for the 15 of us, and the Outer Circle has all the labs and guard rooms for the grownups.”
She called it a passageway, but the two of them were walking down a space wide and tall enough for a large semi-trailer truck to drive down. Biondetta energetically ran around and gave him a tour, but that made for a dangerous sight with her short surgical gown. Especially around the knot on the side.
The adults referred to the ceiling as the Great Ceiling. That single tall ceiling covered everything and separate buildings of various heights existed below that. Each room had its own ceiling and the single Great Ceiling existed above those. It was a lot like a city had been thrown into an underground space and a spider web of roads was created between them.
Also, the passageway appeared endless. There was supposedly an underground evacuation command center in the United States that was so large electronic carts were needed to get around, but this was likely even larger. There was a dividing line down the center of the passageway which was clearly meant for vehicles. There were also lines on the sides to divide the vehicle lanes from the sidewalk.
“Have you seen the living space? It’s incredible! There’s a pool, a tennis court, and a bowling alley in there! Oh, and there’s, um, uh! Darts and billiards! There’s grownup sports like that too!”
The adults had set all that up so it was nothing for her to look so proud of, but Kyousuke held his tongue. As he watched Biondetta’s boundaries begin to melt away, he decided he might have to think about the miraculous

scenario of her eventually getting in a bad mood if anyone simply spoke ill of the adults.
“Do you know what exactly we will doing?”
“Uuh…! Of course I do!! I’m the big sister!! U-um…what was it? Something about placing 15 strangers with nothing in common in the same environment, putting them through occasional trials and disasters, and having us work to overcome them…”
As they cooperated with, negotiated with, or opposed each other, the boundaries between them would vanish. Each time some of them came together, their bonds would strengthen and the 15 strangers would eventually become a true family. The adults wished to work out the shortest and quickest route to that point. They wanted to find a method that could be broadly interpreted and disseminated to the entire human race in order to bring those 6-7 billion people together as a single group.
The earth would live as a single household.
And that would eliminate the sparks that brought war.
“But even without all that complicated stuff, I just hope we can all get along. I’m not gonna let the grownups control me. We should overthrow them ourselves!”
Biondetta thought she was rebelling while unwittingly doing exactly what they wanted.
The trials and disasters brought to the children would be presented as several different stages. There was no guarantee that the difficulty would increase each time. It might rise and then fall or it might suddenly skyrocket. The adults would likely use a number of patterns to keep the children on their toes.
And then Biondetta grinned.
“The truth is, I’m one step ahead of the grownups.”
“?”
“I overhead them talking about the biggest and most impressive of the trials. Want to know what it is? You do, don’t you!?”
If it was all prepared in advance, it would be coming whether they knew about it or not, but Kyousuke held his tongue.
“What is it?”
“Well, you see.”
Biondetta brought her mouth to his ear like she was letting him in on a big secret.
And her sweet breath carried her voice.
“The grownups are going to send the White Queen after us.”
Silence fell.
Biondetta had revealed the secret, but she must not have known the gravity of what she had just said.
If she had, she would have been trembling a lot more.
“…”

“I’m not really sure what that means, though. I’m the Cheshire Cat and you’re the Guide Rabbit. Hmm, maybe I should’ve at least watched the movie. Was there a White Queen in that story?”
Meanwhile, they arrived at their living space in the Inner Circle.
Oddly, they walked right toward Kyousuke’s room.
“What to come in?”
“No, no, no! No!!”
For some reason, Biondetta held down the short bottom of her surgical gown and rapidly shook her head.
“I mean, we’re a boy and a girl! But wait. Is it not a problem since we’re siblings? No, no! No? No, I can’t! I can’t today!! Bye!!”
After her thoughts jumped around here and there, she ultimately decided against it. After raising a hand for a quick goodbye, she awkwardly ran off while blushing a little.
Kyousuke stood in front of his door, watched the innocent girl leave, and then slowly sighed.
Instead of entering the room given to him, he leaned his back against the door.
And he looked up at the Great Ceiling so far above.
“…The White Queen.”
He felt like the world grew heavier as soon as he spoke that name aloud.
It was like invisible hands were pressing down on his shoulders.
The White Queen.
He pictured those words in his mind once more.
“Oh?”
And then someone else passed by.
It was the adult woman with the tight skirt, lab coat, black ponytail, and scrunchie who had spoken back in the central Mock Battlefield. She was Shigara Masami, aka Madam Professor. She was sitting in a two-seater convertible, but she was not even holding the wheel. It was likely a fully autonomous electric cart.
“Did you need some time alone? Well, we won’t interfere for the time being, but do you think you can get along with the others?”
“I am here because that was desired of me.”
That was the expected exchange.
But then Shigara Masami cracked her neck and gave a cynical smile.
This smile was clearly different from the one during her speech in the circular space.
It was like an amusement park worker having a different smile at work and in private.
“But that would be boring. …This system is correct, but it lacks humanity.”
“?”
“Kyousuke-kun, allow me to input one little thing. Oh, I know. How about we go with, ‘When you first see someone in the morning, give them a cheerful greeting’?”

He could not figure out the purpose of that.
The ponytail beauty laughed at his puzzled look.
“Does that seem pointless? But, Kyousuke-kun, nothing in the world now is pointless,” she said. “After all, countless countries and civilizations fell into ruin to reach this day and this moment was built up from only that which managed to survive. So everything that exists now must have special meaning in just this moment. Because it had enough value to survive. Kyousuke-kun, make sure you understand that. This ‘game’ may not affect the outcome of the Fifteen Siblings Project, but it is a little something extra that is sure to help you in a larger framework. And then…”
“And then?”
“You all will be able to stay sane even after encountering the White Queen.”
Silence fell once more.
Shigara Masami waved her hand from the electric cart that resembled a two-seater convertible.
“Don’t forget the strength needed to maintain a normal, everyday life and don’t forget the meaning of peace. Even in this harsh environment. Bye, bye.”
With that, the electric cart smoothly drove away.
Kyousuke did not open door to his room.
He started down the wide passageway again. He walked and walked and walked and walked until he arrived in the Outer Circle where the developers lived and lost themselves in their work.
He walked all the way to the outermost edge.
There was nothing manmade there; only a thick wall of natural rock.
He made sure no one was watching.
And then Shiroyama Kyousuke smoothly opened a door in what was supposedly a blank wall.

Facts

- Shiroyama Kyousuke and the rest of the 15 were problem children gathered from around the world.
- The Miniature Garden exists 500 meters underground.
- During the initial stage, the Miniature Garden was only the Miniature Garden and not the Queen’s Miniature Garden.
- The Fifteen Siblings Project was meant to break down mankind’s Eros and Thanatos to bring them together into a single group. The 15 children gathered in a sealed space would be occasionally put

through trials and disasters so they would cooperate with, negotiate with, and oppose each other until they ultimately strengthened their bonds, lost their boundaries, and viewed themselves as a single family. The project was meant to discover the shortest and quickest route to that result.

- Based on what Biondetta overheard the adults saying, the greatest trial will involve the White Queen. However, she did not understand what that meant.
- Perhaps because the project is underway, changes can be seen in the 15 children’s behavior and manner of speech.
- In addition to that, Kyousuke will “correct” his own behavior to match those around him.
- At this point, Shigara Masami is aware of the White Queen’s presence.
- Kyousuke is keeping a secret from the others. There is an exit only he is aware of.

Opening X-02: Peel Back the Outer Layer to Reveal Another

“Now this is just awful. Is this anything an ally of justice should be doing?”
“Says the evil star who cannot keep himself going without someone to attack.”
(Opening X-02 Open 09/16 13:30 “Before the War”)
Peel Back the Outer Layer to Reveal Another

You are given just one mission.
Make the world a better place. That is all.

The wall was covered with monitors which were controlled by large consoles. In addition to the operators using that specialty equipment, a very small group relaxed in leather chairs.
They were the truly powerful.
They were the summoners that stood at the top of Government, Illegal, and Freedom.
It was close to a miracle for the three of them to be sitting at a single table.
The fear of destroying that delicate balance created too much tension for anyone to even carry over a cup of tea.
The only person who rudely intruded was the visitor who opened the door and stepped inside.
It was Shiroyama Kyousuke in his surgical gown and pants.
“Right on time. Everything is going well. …In fact, it’s progressing so smoothly that I’m getting bored. You really are not a cute kid in the slightest.”
The room was in motion.
A voice filled the air.
The voice had an aged weight to it, but the speaker was actually about Kyousuke’s own age. The girl had glossy black hair cut at shoulder length and she wore a kimono with gothic lolita frills added on. Even as she elegantly sat in her seat, her shoulder supported a primitive and standard Blood-Sign carved from a single sacred tree. It was not even collapsible and could not be taken apart.
She was Government Award 2799, Humanism.

Starting from the very basics, she had crossed between the three major powers and ultimately become one of the Thousand Eaters who achieved quadruple digits. She was an embodiment of human strength, but she had not joined the gods and had instead remained in the human world. She said she would depart on that journey once all sorrow had vanished from the world of man and felt no more reluctance, but even she knew that day would never come.

“This is the problem with you allies of justice. You force people to cooperate and you truly believe you can snatch up only the tear-jerking parts for yourself.”

Those words were spat out by a man with stubble and slicked back blond hair. He was a dangerous individual who wore a fancy suit yet would never be mistaken for a professional stock trader. He looked like he had stepped right out of an old mafia movie.

He was Illegal Award 0, Open Bluff.

He had never even bound a contract and never once summoned a Material. That meant he could not be called a summoner or a vessel, but he still had enough influence on the Summoning Ceremony industry to be the head of Illegal. Just like a normal person, his Award 0 status meant he would forget everyone related to the Summoning Ceremony as soon as they left his field of vision, but he was never betrayed or attacked. This was simply because gangs did not rule through power. They ruled through the illusion of having power. If he set up an environment where his enemies would tremble in fear and his allies would be charmed by that fear, the gears would turn on their own and bring about a favorable result even if he forgot all about it. He was truly an embodiment of the Illegal ideal of rejecting all proper effort.

“…Hnyah…yawn…mutter mutter…”

Lastly, a beautiful woman was nodding off despite the tense atmosphere around her. She wore a Taoist outfit with long slits in it and she had a charm on her forehead, so she looked a lot like a Chinese Jiangshi.

She was Freedom Award 500, Perfect Equilibrium.

She had no interest in any conflict and had simply slaughtered any who disturbed her slumber, but the next thing she knew, she had been lifted up to the top of a major power. Summoners were not the type to let sleeping dogs lie, so some had tried to make a name for themselves by using that trait of hers to attack their enemies, but she had destroyed all of them while acting only for her own amusement. Her Awards were precisely at the middle because she saw meaning in that mixture of good and bad, yin and yang…or so it was rumored. No one had ever actually asked her directly. It went without saying what happened to any fool who even slightly disturbed her sleep with an unnecessary question.

The three of them did not have their vessels with them.

That was a sign that they were disarmed and gathered at a neutral table. Kyousuke declined to take a seat and remained standing as he asked a question.

“Is it really necessary to do this in the Miniature Garden?”
“You have that backwards. This place was prepared specifically to do this. The underground facility and all the personnel are setting the stage.”
“But most of them know nothing about the White Queen.”
“Unfortunately, the White Queen will be summoned somewhere in the world even if we end this now. And she will cause endless damage outside our control…just as she always has. So we will summon her under our control, manage the damage, and thoroughly crush her so that she can never show her face again. That is the wise choice here.”
“Completely destroying *the* White Queen? …Be honest. What are the odds of success?”
“…Hnyah…”
Were they taking him seriously or not?
Kyousuke’s voice seemed to be sucked into a bottomless hole. A voice did respond, but did it mean anything or was it only an echo? The hole was too deep and dark to tell.
The small boy glanced over to the monitors covering the wall.
They displayed the many developers, the many guards, and the many specimens… Biondetta and Shigara Masami were among them. Those people were of various ranks and various classes, but none of them realized that they were being monitored by another stage higher than their own.
“Now this is just awful. Is this anything an ally of justice should be doing?”
“Says the evil star who cannot keep himself going without someone to attack.”
The leaders whispered amongst themselves after following Kyousuke’s gaze.
If they had simply ridiculed the people from a position of superiority, it would have been vulgar but understandable. However, it took Kyousuke a while to understand because they expressed pity from the bottom of their hearts.
The Miniature Garden was no more than a large studio set and the Fifteen Siblings Project was no more than a script.
The White Queen.
The “White” Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
Out of the thousands or even tens of thousands of paths for the Summoning Ceremony, that theoretical strongest of the strongest was found by switching from Material to Material, climbing from the Regulation-class to the Divine-class and then the Unexplored-class, and ultimately reaching the peak of even that.
She was a mysterious being much like the imaginary numbers that could not actually be seen or experienced but were necessary to explain the laws of the world.
In a way, that Queen was like a tornado.

Even if they could be seen and were feared for their destructive power, no one was able to explain precisely how they formed. And it certainly was not known how to artificially create one.
Very few people could actually summon her.
Even the leaders of the three major powers preferred to use the primary colors of the Unexplored-class who were known as the Three, so they did not try to reach for that pure white. Those calm leaders had supposedly mastered their craft, but people often questioned – without voicing those doubts – whether or not those leaders could actually reach the pure white.
The White Queen had appeared here and there due to pure coincidence.
Only her overwhelming strength had spread through the world.
But the difficulty was much greater when it came to intentionally summoning her in an actual battle.
Kyousuke was one of those who had done so by accident.
It had been pure coincidence.
Just before the end of the Artificial Sacred Ground's 10 minute time limit and just before the battle ended in a draw, she had manifested for a mere 0.02 seconds.
…On the other hand, there were a great many who claimed to rule in the name of the White Queen, but they always met tragic ends. They knew they could not reach her using the Blood-Sign method, so they forcibly twisted the formulas and only managed to glimpse her fingertip or a single hair for just a moment. However, the Queen's stored energy and brainwashing charisma had still been enough to bring damage on an unbelievable scale to locations around the world.
She was the ultimate joker that one could not afford to draw.
She was too effective as both a poison and a medicine. That was Kyousuke's honest opinion.
And.
This giant hole had been made to discover the people who had come into contact with that greatest evil, who had discovered a fragment of her power, or who had caught a glimpse of her charisma. And it was designed so those people would naturally step into the cage themselves.
Those people would normally be destroyed where no one could see, so the damage would only spread and spread.
So if the most dangerous people around the world were gathered in one spot and locked in, it was obvious where the White Queen would be summoned. And if she could be truly killed inside that giant cage built deep underground, then no one else would ever be exposed to that threat.
The world would have peace.
"Let's make this mankind's final battle," said the embodiment of justice who led Government.
They were words as white as bleach that were so clean that they could end anyone's life.

“So I have high hopes for the solution you presented to us: the Sewn Realm Summoning.”
Kyousuke’s shoulders moved slightly.
Next the flower of evil spoke to the boy who had created this situation.
“The small snowball you started rolling has grown quite a bit larger in our hands. It can easily crush the houses at the bottom of the slope now, so end this task yourself. It can be a coincidence, some twisted and misguided reasoning, or whatever else, but the Miniature Garden group will summon that disgusting Queen for their project. You sew her to this world so she can’t escape back to the other side. If you do…”
The atmosphere changed.
The Taoist outfit woman with a charm on her forehead had been nodding off before, but she stopped moving now.
She had briefly awoken. A thick scent of death hung over them all.
And they finally heard the words of the leader of those who put their own enjoyment first.
“We will completely and utterly kill her so that there is not even the slightest chance of her making a comeback ever again.”

Facts

- The Miniature Garden and the Fifteen Siblings Project are no more than bluffs prepared by “the truly powerful” who lead the three major powers of the Summoning Ceremony.
- At this point, excluding accidents, summoning the White Queen using the Summoning Ceremony is extremely rare and is treated like the specifics of a tornado’s formation. Meanwhile, worshipers around the world have tried to forcibly summon even a portion of the White Queen using a method other than the Blood-Sign method, but they always receive harsh retaliation and devastating damage.
- The truly powerful made a list of everyone around the world who had come into contact with the White Queen herself or a small fragment of her (whether intentionally or not) and prepared a giant underground space and a grand project that would naturally lead those people into the cage. That way any trouble will occur under their control and they can manage the scope of that trouble.
- The truly powerful’s final objective is to fully kill the White Queen who brings chaos to the world.

- To do that, they called in Shiroyama Kyousuke and selected the Sewn Realm Summoning he suggested.
- Biondetta, Shigara Masami, and the others connected to the Miniature Garden do not know this truth.
- So they will never be able to become Shiroyama Kyousuke’s family. Ever.

Stage 01: Named Summoners, the 15 Children

“Biondetta, you hit #5 and #8 into the pocket too. This is a complete mess.”
“Call me Detta! And am I only here so everyone can bully me!?”
(Stage 01 Open 09/17 07:00 “Before the War”)
Named Summoners, the 15 Children

Part 1

Kyousuke was faced by an unbelievable reality.
“I dyed my hair pink.”
“…”
Biondetta’s flowing hair had been blonde before, but she had suddenly taken a step into the realm of fantasy. And it was more than just her hair that had left reality. She had cow-like horns on her head and an arrow-shaped tail on her butt. It badly clashed with her chemical-colored surgical gown.
The 15 children’s living space in the Miniature Garden’s Inner Circle had a number of spaces used for socializing. Kyousuke frowned inside one of those which seemed larger than two school classrooms.
“What in the world is this?”
“It’s called preparation.” Biondetta tried to act like the big sister, but the innocence of her smile overshadowed it. “The Queen of Hearts – that is, Kyoumi – has some unexpected skills. Of all things, she says she can make clothes all on her own! She’s going around taking requests right now. It won’t be long until I can say goodbye to *this skimpy thing covered in knots.*”
“Hm? Aren’t there tons of clothes in the walk-in closet?”
“…You want me to choose from *there*?”
Despite being underground, the Miniature Garden was supplied well enough that they could play baseball or soccer if they wanted to. The stock

of clothing was stacked up in giant piles. …Yes, it was just like a giant warehouse at a port used for exporting goods.
But…
“With all that surrounding me, I get dizzy. I don’t want to get anywhere near that closet anytime soon. I really do feel like I’ll get los-…I mean, get stranded while surrounded by all those piles of clothes.”
“So when you have too much choice, you end up unable to make a decision?”
“Hm?”
“Oh, nothing.”
Kyousuke and the rest of the 15 were not restricted in their life cycle. They could get up when they wanted, eat what they wanted, and do what they wanted. There was no schedule like a school’s class schedule or a prison’s work schedule.
Nevertheless, most of them, including Kyousuke, were still wearing the surgical gowns they had been initially given. There were no windows and the concepts of morning and night meant little here, but they mostly functioned on a 24 hour schedule, got up at about the same time, and spoke with the others they got along with.
There was nothing rewarding or punishing them, so the adults were only manipulating them by having them enter that “framework” of their own free will.
This experiment was meant to turn the 15 of them into a single family.
Whether she had noticed that or not, Biondetta continued with an innocent smile.
“Instead of trying on an endless number of combinations like I’m brute-forcing a password, Kyoumi says she can create the image I have in my head! You should go speak with her too.”
“I’m fine with anything as long as it’s easy to move in…”
It sounded like this would be the next trend, so Kyousuke made his decision a lot like checking the weather before deciding if he would hang the laundry out to dry.
Biondetta giggled in her short surgical gown.
“Kyoumi would be upset if she heard you say that.”
“But won’t it be a lot of work for her if everyone asks her?”
“Not at all. She likes doing it, so she’ll be upset if you take the chance away from her.”
Was that how it worked?
Kyousuke’s eyes mechanically dilated as he discovered another correction to make in the future.
And then a floral scent tickled his nose. The next thing he knew, he felt something soft on his back. Someone seemed to have hugged him from behind. They wrapped their arms around his head, so he saw feminine arms passing over his shoulders and draping down to his chest.
He turned his head in her arms.

And what did he find?
The white clothing and silver twintails of a Queen with incredible pow-
A pink-haired girl with a welcoming smile that seemed to cover her entire face.
“Oh, *Kyoumi*!”
“Heh heh. I made this before anything else.”
When he called her name, the girl responded with a smile brimming with humanity.
She had somewhat drooping black eyebrows and a lively face. She looked nothing like a being spoken of in legends. She must have made a pattern from scratch, cut the cloth herself, taken apart clothing from the humongous closet, and incorporated pieces of those. She wore a luxurious wedding dress with pieces cut away and it *glittered with plenty of red, green, and yellow plastic decorations dangling from it.*

She was Shiroyama Kyoumi.
She was one of the 15 and her card was the Queen of Hearts.
She was about two sizes taller than Kyousuke and Biondetta and she would probably be in high school in the outside world. She had prepared an alternative outfit as part of her hobby, but it may have also been because she had not liked how the surgical gown had shown off her growing bodylines.
“There are a lot of paintings and sculptures in the materials room near the Mock Battlefield, remember? I based it on those. What do you think? If I can reproduce this so well, you can be deadly sure I can answer any of your requests, right?”
“…”
The “White” Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
The being that Kyousuke had carelessly caught a glimpse of during battle even though she could not be summoned intentionally.
Like a tornado, she could be seen by coincidence, but the details of how she appeared were not fully understood. Three of the truly powerful had joined together and arrived one thin layer away from the front line to deal with that ultimate threat. Only people at that level could see the threat lurking behind the radiant light. And Kyoumi was dressed up as that being.
“Hmm? Your pulse is racing, you dirty little boy.”
“Kyoumi-san, you don’t have to get so close.”
“Just call me Kyoumi. And I deadly mean it. Add the ‘-san’ and I’ll punish you like this☆”
She started rubbing her cheek up against him.
Kyousuke was helpless and sighed quietly, but Biondetta seemed to notice.
“What is it?”
“Well…we’ve been here for a while now, but it’s always the same people that end up gathering together.”
The 15 were still divided into a few groups and they frequently spoke with the others in their group, but they barely interacted with anyone outside it.
“I was just wondering if this is what you would call a family.”
“Who knows. I mean, we were *sold off*. We don’t have an example of an average and normal family.”
There was no sarcasm or scorn in her voice. Biondetta truly sounded puzzled.
Kyousuke turned his head and only saw a troubled smile from Cosplay Kyoumi.
“It’s not like the other groups are all that different, though.”
“Oh, you went around taking requests, didn’t you!?”
Biondetta gave a beaming smile like that was a huge discovery. Unlike her or Kyousuke, Kyoumi made appearances in all of the groups.
But Kyoumi ended up settling down in this group. They had decided where she belonged and she would only “visit” the other groups.

“Hey, Kyoumi. Do you think this structure is a success for the grownups?”
“Something might be happening soon. Something deadly.”
The Queen of Hearts finally left Kyousuke’s back as she said that.
Perhaps because he had dropped the “-san” as she asked.
“After all, they said they would put us through trials and disasters to break down the barriers between us and turn us into a single family. Maybe they’re checking where the gaps between us are while they adjust things to fill those in. They might be using a supercomputer or something.”
It was like gathering everyone in a movie theater to have them all face the same direction and shed the standardized tears.
Or like taking each other’s hands to board the lifeboat while escaping a sinking ship.
“More importantly, I visit all of the groups, so I have a lot of information on all 15 of us. And if you ask me, Kyousuke, you’re a flashing yellow light right now. You should be careful.”
“?”
When he tilted his head a little, Shiroyama Kyoumi presented an extremely realistic problem despite her otherworldly outfit.
“You’re breeding some jealousy. Especially from that berserker, the Hatter. You need to be deadly careful.”

Part 2

The Miniature Garden was quite large.
Each room tended to be the size of a school gym and they were arranged like a necklace of morning dew on a spider web. The main corridors connecting rooms were large enough for semi-trailer trucks to pass each other and even the secondary corridors were large enough for a normal car to drive around. Kyousuke and the others could use program-controlled electric carts if they wanted, but a lot of them chose to travel on foot.
There was a simple reason for this.
They could jog to build up their strength.
“Hey, Rabbit Boy. If you’re headed south, then join me.”
“…”
Kyousuke did not bother matching his pace to the boy who arrived next to him.
They both maintained their high-speed pace, but Kyousuke did not reject the boy either and continued running as planned.

This was the Hatter, the leader of another group. That group had the most people in it. He was even older than the Queen of Hearts and, from Kyousuke's perspective, he looked almost like he belonged with the adults. He had messy blond hair, dark skin, and a strong body.
Instead of a surgical gown with pants like Kyousuke, he casually wore a white jacket without a necktie. And true to his assigned name, he had a small straw hat on his head. But that hat had a silverwork decoration wrapped around it, so it looked a lot like a crown.
He gave off a similar scent to that man from Illegal. Or perhaps it was the scent of a Central or South American criminal organization.
It was obvious from the way the fabric was used, but his outfit probably had not been made by Kyoumi. Everyone else had been daunted by the humongous closet, but he had looked through the tens of thousands of options and found the optimal combination on his own.
In other words, he had *spontaneously* left the rails set by the adults.
And Shiroyama Kyoumi had called him a berserker.
Even in Lewis Carroll's already absurd and nonsensical story, the Hatter on his card was known for being insane and broken.
"If you're headed south, are you taking a class with someone? Like with Kuresawa?"
"With Shigara-san."
"Madam Professor, huh? I doubt you'll get much out of that anytime soon…"
"But she seems to be the most normal. Both in the theories she presents and in her personality."
The Hatter laughed scornfully.
They were conversing while running at an above average pace, but neither of them seemed at all out of breath.
"That's a good one."
He was the madman.
He had been given the role deemed nonsensical even in a children's story full of absurdities.
"But, Kyousuke, you're probably the only *specimen who finds any solace* in the fact that someone's the 'most normal'."
"…"
"Does Biondetta look normal to you? Or for someone else near you, what about Kyoumi? Don't make me laugh. They're warped in their own ways. Not that I'm one to talk when I'm the craziest of us all. For one thing, it isn't normal to be taken to this Miniature Garden. We were invited here to the far end of the world, so there had to be some reason we were selected. That's how it works. So," continued the Hatter. "I'm curious about you. If we were going to rank the 15 of us, Humpty Dumpty and the Jabberwock might end up higher than you. But I'm still curious. My nose for combat ignores my crazy brain and I can't stop myself from talking. Shiroyama Kyousuke, the strangest and least normal one here is you, the one who looks the most normal. After all…"

He arrived at a certain conclusion.
“You were still the most normal when we had our first experience with the Summoning Ceremony and made our contract with the Three.”
They stopped moving.
Their high-speed pace came to a sudden end because the Hatter held a long spear-like stick out horizontally to block Kyousuke’s path.
It was a Blood-Sign.
That crystallization of human knowledge could freely summon otherworldly beings and even used the gods in heaven as a stepping stone to reach even greater heights.
Their shapes and materials varied, but the Hatter’s started as a single silver coin. At some point, more and more coins stacked on top of the one in his hand until it had transformed into a long and heavy metal rod.
“You’d normally be afraid when something like this is suddenly handed to you. And when you learn that gods exist so nearby and that our damned human hands *can control* the laws of heaven.”
This boy did not judge people based on their size or age.
That madman judged all threats equally if he deemed them to be insane.
“You’d normally tremble in fear when you learn you’ll be cut off from normal society and will be forgotten by normal people once you leave their field of vision. It isn’t that I really want to head outside or that I want go around working to help people in society. But even if it’s only a hypothetical, it’s hard to accept that someone else took away the option to live a normal life.”
Had there been any meaning in him drawing the Hatter card?
Was he someone who measured the size of people’s heads and gave form to something to contain them?
“It would make sense to tear at your hair and writhe on the floor. It was only the very first step and we were already at that level. And yet you’ve somehow managed to maintain yourself. That’s because you weren’t normal in the first place. What I’m saying is…you’re weird. It’s weird that you can stay normal while you accept this decidedly abnormal environment. *In fact, did you even bind a contract there?*”
The hatter quietly stared at him.
His eyes may have contained madness, but they were steady.
Strangely, his eyes seemed more focused on reality than anyone else’s.
“Who exactly are you?”
“…”
“Why are you here? You’re the most normal and the most deeply involved, so it doesn’t feel like you were ‘brought’ here.”
That was when a quiet metallic sound reached them.
Instead of from ahead, behind, left, or right, it came from directly above. It came from the tall, tall Great Ceiling. Something was tangled around the steel beams from which the countless halogen lights hung. It was a dark shadow. It was an octopus-like dark blue night combat uniform with a gas

mask. In addition to the two legs, mechanical tentacles extended from the waist and wrapped around the steel beams.
The figure stood upside down and motionlessly readied a carbine with a grenade launcher equipped on the bottom.
The adults had said they would not interfere with the 15's life.
But that had been retracted thanks to the threat approaching Kyousuke's throat.
Faced with that inhuman accuracy, the Hatter sighed and put away the silver coin Blood-Sign. The coins fell away, but not a single one was heard hitting the floor. They all vanished into empty air.
"The guards, huh?"
They relied on guns, but since they could perceive Kyousuke and the others, they likely had Awards. Since they were not focused on summoning, they may have stopped below 100 to maintain a compromise with the real world.
"They have to know the superiority of guns isn't gonna cut it."
But the Hatter had not fallen back because he feared the bullets.
He had more to say as he left.
"I think there was meaning in the cards we chose at the beginning. You could call it fate."
"…And what did you see in the Hatter?"
"First, that I'm unexplainably insane. And second, that I'm obsessed with crowns."
The madman laughed and poked at his temple.
"And I'm not talking about this straw hat thing. Taking on bulletproof armor and bullets won't get you anywhere. The expenses will just keep piling up and you won't have anything to show for it. If you head into the mountains with a nice polished hunting rifle, you don't just want shoot some crows and rats, right?"
"…"
"I want to fight someone with a larger crown on their name. Now that would be worth stuffing and mounting on the wall. Shiroyama Kyousuke, you're probably the master of this mountain. And the crown on your head isn't anything as cheap as 'strongest' or 'invincible' is it?"
The Hatter turned down another road.
Sensing the threat had passed, the gas mask figure up above moved his or her tentacles to leave.
Left all alone, Kyousuke stared in the direction the madman had gone.
The way that boy spoke, no one would believe anything he said. And he seemed to enjoy that, so he showed no sign of changing.
But how much of the truth had he seen in Kyousuke?
Had he seen through to the foundation of the Fifteen Siblings Project? Or had he seen through the next thin layer and to what lay even deeper?

Part 3

“You really like to make things exciting, don’t you?”
Shigara Masami sighed on her stool with her long black hair held in a ponytail by a scrunchie and while wearing a dark blue tight skirt suit and a lab coat.
In addition to the living space for the developers and guards, the Outer Circle contained several research facilities of various sizes. They all took different approaches toward making the 15 into a single family.
Madam Professor of Government used a space much like a hospital examination room.
It contained a stool, a steel desk, and a simple examination table. There was a light box for viewing X-rays on the wall and a computer and flat-screen monitor on the desk. The desk also had a small bottle of sunflower seeds, so she may have been keeping some sort of pet. Or did she eat them herself? It was hard to tell.
This was likely a form of roleplaying.
The Fifteen Siblings Project was structured like a family, but the adults had each constructed their own independent worlds: a school, a corporation, an army, a prison, a passenger plane, a cooking classroom, a workshop, a fitness gym, and a hospital. They all had their own unique color, but anything worked as long as it formed a hierarchy or a society with a host.
However, this was not actually an examination room. There would be a bunch of frightening machines beyond the white cloth partition behind Shigara Masami.
“Any risks to your safety or peace are reported to us. So things are tense enough for someone to pull out their Blood-Sign? …You do understand that continuing in that way would lead to an appearance from the gods of legend or something even greater, don’t you? We manage all the Incense Grenades, but they aren’t entirely impossible to make on one’s own. Especially for kids like you who aren’t exactly normal.”
“I didn’t do it.”
“Well, they say rain hardens the ground and conflict is a form of communication. And you wouldn’t be much of a family if you never fought.”
She whispered that last comment to herself.
She also toyed with the stethoscope (which was probably a prop for her roleplaying) resting on her large chest and she glanced over at the flat-screen monitor on the desk.
It displayed a colorful line graph that changed in real time, but it did not seem to be an EKG or stock prices.
There were 15 lines in all.

That matched the number of siblings.
“This is a Relective Graph. …Of course, it’s just one of the indicators we use.”
It measured their heartrate and brainwaves to create a general approximation of them as a person.
So the closer the lines came together, the less distance there was between them as people. And they would eventually converge enough to call them a family.
There were about three main branches and Kyousuke was part of one of those.
The Hatter was wandering all alone near the very top of the graph.
It was looking difficult for them all to converge into a single main river. And even if they did, there was little data suggesting that would actually prove they were a family. The researchers had simply taken statistical data from thousands or tens of thousands of volunteer families and the majority of those sample families had converged to that extent.
(Plus, summoners and vessels disappear from all cameras and sensors while inside an Artificial Sacred Ground, so this allows them to notice right away if we try to use the Summoning ceremony in secret.)
That said, Kyousuke and the others had simply been told to “become a family”, so it was nice having some visible numbers to set as a goal.
The lab coat beauty intentionally changed the mood while crossing her legs.
“Okay, we don’t want to waste any time, so let’s get to ‘studying’, Kyousuke-kun. Thank you for choosing my basic theory again.”
To reiterate, Kyousuke and the rest of the 15 were generally free to do as they wished and they were not forced to follow anything like a school schedule or a prison work schedule.
They were free to choose if they would take lessons from the adults and which one they would choose as a teacher. Some stuck to a single individual, some stayed away from them and studied alone, and others wandered from one to another in search of one that suited them.
They were free to do as they wished, but they naturally aimed for the top.
Why? There was a simple reason.
No one wanted to be branded incompetent and mocked as an idiot. There were two ways to avoid that: trip up everyone else or outdo everyone else.
For the time being, the 15 were tending toward the latter.
She placed the negative to some data in the light box meant for viewing X-rays.
“Okay, pay attention here. The framework of a ‘family’ can mean many different things, but there are a few theories as to how we define a family. Simply using blood relationships is a tad unrealistic. After all, human beings are not skilled enough to perform a blood test just by looking at someone.”
“But the closer someone’s genetics, the more similar their facial features will be. Isn’t it defined as people who look a lot like you?”

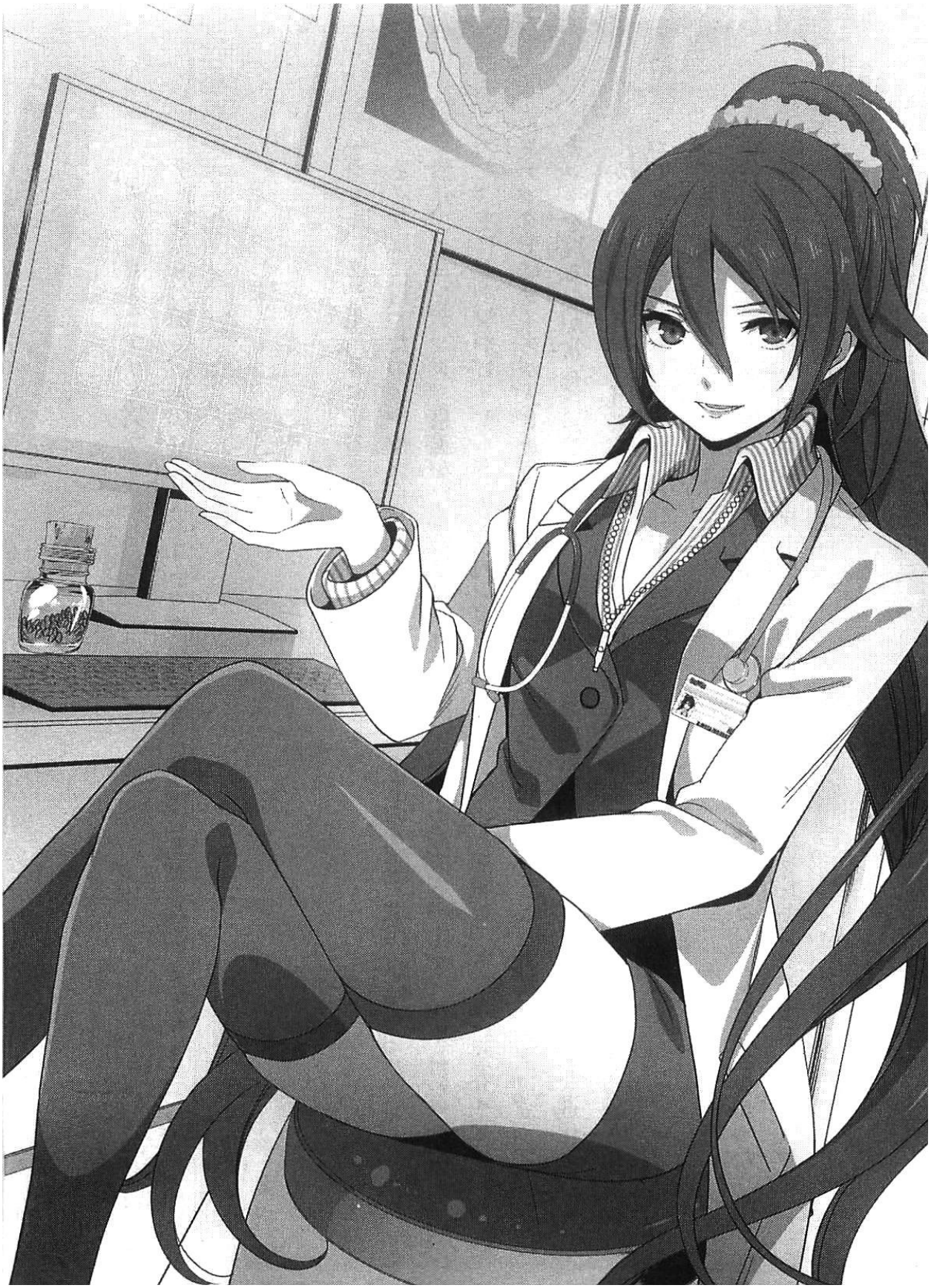
“In that case, you can never grow any closer to your wife or your step sister.”
“So a family is defined by something that happens in life, not by your birth? Like the imprinting of a chick?”
“This would be a lot easier if it was that simple. I think the life cycle – especially what you eat – is important.”
“So you’ve gone back to the basics of building a nest?”
“People’s scent is influenced by what they eat. If you live in the same house and pick up the same cycle, you will naturally smell a lot alike. And one of the most well-known signs of future family troubles is when someone stops showing up for meals. That shift in the cycle alters their scent, so the two of them will stop viewing each other as part of the same group. If a large enough gap forms, they might as well be strangers.”
“That would explain why a new member can join a family, but isn’t it a little forceful? By that logic, someone who ‘leaves’ to live on their own or to marry into another family would no longer be seen as part of the family.”
“Oh? It isn’t unusual for distance to grow between family members when one begins a new life. When that family member returns for the Bon festival or New Year’s, don’t people find them to be ‘nostalgic’? Although I will admit that genetically similar people will emit similar hormones, so they gain a similar scent more easily when eating the same food.”
“But wouldn’t that mean you temporarily lose the ability to recognize your family when you have a cold or allergies?”
“In all seriousness, I think the tendency of people to act rudely while sick may be key to this. Oh, if only we could investigate the corpses of the medieval nobility whose bloodline morality completely collapsed. There’s a chance that attempted poisonings and rampant venereal disease had dulled their senses…”
“I really think you’re going a bit far to suggest stuffing some balled up tissues in your nose will break down the bonds of family.”
“Ah! You’re using that example to make fun of me, aren’t you!?”
The adult woman started pouting, but stuffing tissues in her nose was unfortunately not going to fix it.
This was the theory held by Shigara Masami, one of the developers who managed the Miniature Garden.
It was but one of dozens, if not hundreds, of theories.
Learning about these things would not help them in society, nor would it lead to any special qualifications or skills. But if the 15 absorbed these, they would be able to share in the values of this Miniature Garden. It was like a guidebook with a valuable coupon in the back. Learning it came with a variety of privileges and enriched their lives. They would no longer carelessly stumble.
At a college-prep school, the students were taught the importance of educational history. At a technical school, they were taught the value of unique skills and qualifications. The upperclassman/underclassman

hierarchy and the relationship between classes and years were all built on that basis. Just as a dumb upperclassman would not be viewed with respect at a college-prep school, an egghead upperclassman would be left behind at a sports school. There might be another path for them, but that possibility was rejected. Once they strayed from the path set up by the school, they might consider themselves a dropout and even consider suicide.

“But why bring the Blood-Signs and Summoning Ceremony into this?”

“That would be more about a form of proof and testing than it is the thesis. Not only are Materials a threat to a pure family, they will crush the established theories even when they have been gathered into a system of religious morals. Can a small moral overcome a large one? No, even if it can, it would not bring us all together once it was spread through the world.”

“You’ve mentioned this before,” cut in Kyousuke in his surgical gown and pants. He spoke slowly as if speaking to a small child. “Do you have any evidence suggesting you can safely control *that* once you summon it?”



Shigara Masami maintained her smile.
Ignoring someone's seniority was a simple way of igniting their anger, but this ponytail beauty was not bothered.
"If that is all it takes to crush this, then it is meaningless. If that is all it takes to crush this, it is not worth continuing. Even if we are talking about a tornado we have only received sporadic glimpses of…even if we are talking about the White."
It was the perfect answer.
But as Kyousuke faced her, that perfection seemed to grow brittle.
Not that he was one to talk.
"Now, Kyousuke-kun, did you understand everything I told you?"
"I suppose."
"Then can you repeat it back to me verbatim, starting from the very first word'?"
Those piercing words were the polar opposite of her smile.
That request might normally have elicited shock or a gasp, but Kyousuke was different.
"Starting from, 'You really like to make things exciting, don't you'? Or from, 'Okay, we don't want to waste any time, so let's get to "studying", Kyousuke-kun'?"
Shigara Masami laughed.
Shiroyama Kyousuke rattled off her own words with machine-like accuracy…

Part 4

"The rankings have been updated," said Shiroyama Kyoumi the Queen of Hearts with her somewhat drooping black eyebrows.
Kyousuke, Biondetta, and Kyoumi were in one of the party rooms of the Miniature Garden's Inner Circle. The room was equipped for indoor leisure activities such as darts and billiards. The billiards table was too large, so Kyousuke and Biondetta would stand on a stool when they held the cue. They had to focus on balancing, so they ended up developing a unique style of play. And Biondetta was leaning over with her cue while wearing her short surgical gown, so it was dangerous in another way for her.
At any rate, Kyoumi must not have liked how Kyousuke and Biondetta were too focused on the billiards table to respond, so she moved the ranking board from the large karaoke-style screen to the LCD screen that formed the top surface of the billiards table.

Biondetta had been skillfully lowering her hips and holding her cue while standing on the stool, so she immediately gave a tearful shout.
“Ah! My guide line disappeared!!”
“The. Rankings. Have. Been. Updated.”
Kyoumi did not care. Their positions were already settling into place. The 15 were divided into a few groups and individuals were separated into castes within the groups. Shigara Masami and the others were probably frustrated as they monitored it all.
“Besides, it’s deadly boring if you just hit the ball along a monitor-controlled line. You’re only moving your hands the way you’re told.”
“It’s not supposed to be fun!! This is training. It’s defrag work meant to fine-tune my conditioning, so I have to hit the balls along a preset optimal path. Oh, honestly! Watch me avoid #5 and #8 while hitting #4. If I can bounce the cue off the sides twice…”
After a loud sound, Kyousuke sighed.
“Biondetta, you hit #5 and #8 into the pocket too. This is a complete mess.”
“Call me Detta! And am I only here so everyone can bully me!?”
What kind of training was that?
Kyousuke rubbed chalk on the tip of his cue and faced the billiards table.
1st: Shiroyama Shizuku the Jabberwock.
2nd: Alberto S. Divinesmith the Hatter.
3rd: Claudia Shiroyama the Humpty Dumpty.
4th: Shiroyama Cain the Dodo.
…
…
…
“The top ranks really don’t change much. The top three switch around to a deadly extent, but none of them falls into the lower ranks.”
“I don’t like it,” said pink-haired Biondetta as she balanced on the stool and pouted her lips. “We do just as good as them in pure wins, so why don’t we ever get a top score!?”
“The Summoning ceremony isn’t a tool for fighting; it’s a technique to summon the gods. So there are a number of methods: taking the shortest course to the Material you want or making a swift recovery after some interference.”
“Then why even compete in the first place? If they just want accuracy, we could hit the White Thorns into targets drawn on the wall!”
“That’s because the Summoning Ceremony is based on the one-on-one ritual battles performed for a god.”
Biondetta let Kyoumi rub her head, so it did not look like she was going to move from that spot anytime soon. It was quickly becoming apparent that she made a stubborn show of her pride while actually being very easily swayed.
There were two simple reasons for their focus on this direct ranking system.

First, they wanted a simple method of measuring themselves, just like at a college-prep school or a sports school. If they had a basis with which to judge their status, they could more easily judge their distance from others.
And second, there were enough Blood-Signs and Incense Grenades to go around, but…
“Ahh, ahh. I guess that top 3 group really is going to hog the vessels,” sighed Biondetta while looking to Kyoumi…no, to her costume. “If they have the vessels all to themselves, will they be the first to summon that White Queen who only shows up by accident?”
If they did that, someone might praise them.
She would never admit to it, but Biondetta’s tone made it clear what it was she yearned for.
“…”
There were not enough vessels.
The adults had only prepared 3 vessels for the group of 15.
They remained in the Mock Battlefield and would renew their contract with whoever showed up for a mock battle. But once the top 3 spots were fixed in place, the adults would probably give up on the rest and focus on those 3.
That was an ominous thought in this closed Miniature Garden.
Those 3 would have exclusive use of the Materials which were immune to blades and bullets. It would create the ultimate privileged class. Or it would be just like the ancient religious leaders who coopted the glory of god to further their own corruption. With no way out of this environment, they could not even imagine how much would be taken from the lower ranked group.
(Maybe that would count as success.)
Instead of a cheerful family, it would be structured around a powerful central pillar, but that was still a form of family. The Miniature Garden’s ultimate objective was to remove all seeds of conflict from the human race, so as long as they achieved that result, the process might not matter so much.
And just as Kyousuke considered that, an extraordinary force shook the entire giant structure located 500 meters underground.
The indoor lights had been stable enough to provide the illusion of uniform lighting, but now it blinked irregularly. Was it one of the impact buffering structures, or had things simply exceeded the limits of the design? Either way, the ground rocked like a boat in the waves and they heard disconcerting creaking sounds from overhead.
“Kyah!?”
Biondetta wobbled and nearly fell from the stool. From the other side of the billiards table, Kyousuke held out a cue longer than he was tall and stuck it below her armpit to support her.
“Thank you, but I’d rather you didn’t poke at a fragile maiden with a stick like she’s something dirty.”
“I couldn’t reach.”

For some reason, Biondetta glared at him even after he had saved her. Relationships were hard. Following the formulae did not guarantee everyone would reach the same answer.
“That was close by, wasn’t it?”
Shiroyama Kyoumi the Queen of Hearts hesitantly glanced over toward the party room’s entrance. There must have been a poor connection somewhere because the lamp on the wall was flashing intermittently.
Some time had passed since the explosion, but the room’s roof continued to creak. It felt like the air had grown heavier and an invisible hand was pushing down on their heads. No matter how large the space looked, they were reminded of the thick rock they were trapped below.
And they quickly received an answer.
The shaking had sent the billiards balls rolling all across the table, but the ranking board displayed there had changed.
Biondetta and Kyoumi exchanged a glance.
“The Jabberwock fell from #1?”
“And Humpty Dumpty moved up from #3. Is that what that was…?”
They gulped and started to leave the room…no, to visit the source of the vibration. Instead of a positive curiosity, they were driven by a negative anxiety that would only grow until they saw what had happened.
Kyousuke made sure the billiards board had saved the positions of the balls just before the incident and then followed the girls.
Their living spaces were located in the Inner Circle of the Miniature Garden’s spider web like structure. That was close to the central Mock Battlefield.
And as they approached, it was obvious something was wrong. The smooth white walls had small cracks in them and the internal wiring must have been damaged because a few of the lights were out on the Great Ceiling. The level of damage grew the closer they got to the center. Some of the internal wall panels had collapsed and some doors creaked after being knocked out of place.
“Watch out.”
“Gyubh!?”
Kyousuke grabbed the neck of Biondetta’s surgical gown from behind just before a giant halogen light fell from the Great Ceiling. The basketball-sized mass just barely missed her, but when the pink haired demon turned around, her face was red, she tearfully trembled, and she bit her lip.
“□□□!”
She tried to say something, but she was interrupted.
A few boxy medical carts – something like indoor ambulances – passed them from behind. Help must have been needed for some reason. The insides of the vehicles must not have been enough because guards wearing black clung to the roof and sides as well.
Gray dust wafted out from the Mock Battlefield’s explosion-resistant gate.

While the medical carts rushed in, someone fell out from behind a curtain that looked like dirty cotton candy. It was just like someone who had been wandering through the scorching desert for days and then got caught in a sandstorm right before reaching an oasis. They collapsed while showing no sign of speed or intent.
“Ah,” said Shiroyama Kyoumi without thinking.
Who was Shiroyama Shizuku the Jabberwock?
She was one of the superior ones who was never shaken from her spot in the top 3 on the ranking board. She specialized in the Divine-class of Materials like Yamata no Orochi, Nidhogg, or the Hydra. She did not stick to any one Sound Range or mythology. Instead, she was known for summoning violent dragons. That strong preference led her to play around from time to time, yet she had the skill needed to never drop in the rankings. She never allowed herself to use the lower Regulation-class or the higher Unexplored-class. She always stuck to the Divine-class and used that specialty to manipulate and torment her opponent. She had been a symbol of the wickedness found in the power of mythological beings.
And yet that tyrant of the divine world…
“Ah, ahh, ahhhhhhhhh…”
She had lost the right to stand on two feet and could not even crawl on all fours.
She pressed her cheek to the floor like she had a rag on her face.
Her mouth hung limply open and sticky drool flowed out.
Her bangs covered her eyes which had lost the light of rational thought.
Her core as a human being and her dignity as an individual with a soul had been stolen away and she simply repeated the same action like a windup doll that had fallen on its side.
“…The loser…”
Biondetta groaned that term with the look of someone who had seen a king dragged down from the throne by the commoners.
When someone lost a battle between summoners, they received a shock equivalent to seeing their god killed before their eyes. They became unable to resist what anyone said and would not hesitate to walk off a cliff if someone gestured toward it.
And the guards’ response was simple.
“Leave the summoner. She doesn’t matter!”
“We need to do something about the vessel…”
“Hurry up and dig her out of from the collapsed wall!! She really will die!!”
There was nothing Kyousuke, Biondetta, or Kyoumi could do.
The two girls continued forward, but Kyousuke came to a stop. The most he could do was move the former ruler to the side so she would not be in the middle of the wide passageway.
One of the passing adults, a ponytail beauty, finally came to a stop.
It was Madam Professor Shigara Masami.

She removed her lab coat and placed it over Shiroyama Shizuku, but she also shook her head and spoke to Kyousuke.
“You shouldn’t see any more of this. …This is straying from the main point of the Miniature Garden.”
“But Biondetta and Kyoumi went in there.”
The boy could only shake his head as well.
He left the Jabberwock with Shigara Masami and continued on to find out what was going on.
The guards were rushing all around near the entrance to the Mock Battlefield, but none of them stopped him. They either were too busy to cordon off the place or they were sticking to the basic rule of not interfering with the 15’s life cycle whenever possible.
It should have been a circular space larger than a school gym.
The red and white chess board floor had been peeled up, the walls had crumbled and collapsed, and the guards were struggling with a pile of rubble using a piece of heavy machinery resembling a carnivorous dinosaur.
Someone had done this.
The threat took physical form and reigned supreme beyond the clearing cloud of dust.
It was Claudia Shiroyama, aka Humpty Dumpty.
She was likely the same age as Shiroyama Kyoumi, so she would have been a high school girl in the outside world. But her entire body was contained within a roundly swollen space suit colored white with pink lines, so her build, age, and even sex were not apparent from outside. But her Blood-Sign was the exact opposite of that symbol of cutting-edge science. It was made by chopping up old texts on parchment and rearranging them into a stick.
And that summoner who mixed old with new had a Material by her side.
Biondetta had arrived a bit before Kyousuke and she had fallen to a seated position by the wall. She was trembling with her thighs pressed together inside her surgical gown that was only tied on the side. Just barely avoiding *wetting herself* seemed to be the most she could manage. Droopy eyebrowed Kyoumi always acted like their guardian, but she could do nothing more than place a hand on Biondetta’s shoulder. She had managed to remain standing, but her eyes were opened wide and she did not seem able to move.
There was a simple reason.
“The Unexplored-class,” gulped Kyoumi. “The beings that exist even beyond the gods of legend…”
But was she even speaking of her own free will? It almost looked like it was being forced out of her by an external power.
“This isn’t a fixed match following a routine or a prearranged ritual battle. A summoner can actually summon those deadly things in a real battle where you never know what’s going to happen!?”
It was the “Ashen” Shrine Maiden who Invites Merciful and Dignified Death (e m – a o – l e v – c k – r o l – e i – v b – y u – a – p s).

She was a contradictory being that possessed soft, feminine curves while being as hard as the sculptures found in Greek ruins. She looked like a long-haired beautiful women in a shrine maiden outfit, but she had been thoroughly petrified until she reached an ashen hue void of all color and warmth. It could be her claws, her fangs, the light of her eyes, her hair, her scream, or her scent. From every possible range, she could send out deadly poisons and curses that would provide no pain and would not harm the body, but that would simply steal the soul from its container of flesh. She was the ultimate ruler of life who surpassed any grim reaper. She was an embodiment of *heartwarming blasphemies* such as euthanasia and the eternal preservation of a corpse.
“Why is there an Unexplored-class here?”
But that was not the crux of the problem.
Shiroyama Kyousuke got straight to the point.
“In a Summoning Ceremony battle, the Artificial Sacred Ground vanishes and the Materials go back to being the vessels 90 seconds after the battle ends. It took 5 minutes to arrive after that loud rumbling. So why?”
“Hmm…?”
The voice was muffled by the white spacesuit with pink lines, so its sex was hard to make out.
But the negative emotion came through loud and clear.
“That’s obviously because it’d be boring if it had ended there.”
“…”
“I had just built up a great chain and was going for a major technique, but then she suddenly collapsed. I wasn’t done and I had more to do, so I had to figure out what to do about the chain I was building up.”
“So you intentionally repeated it, didn’t you?”
“Right.”
“The loser can’t disobey any order. *So each time she collapsed, you told her to stand up and fight again*! And you knew she couldn’t think straight after losing!!”
“Until 45 seconds ago anyway. Just having her stand there isn’t great. She’s too weak. It took 34 times before I could finally get my Divine-class up to the Unexplored-class. And I rushed it too much and screwed up, so I wandered into this gray dead-end.”
The spacesuit spun her parchment Blood-Sign around as she cheerfully explained herself.
And she used it to point at the Queen of Hearts…no, at the costume that Kyoumi wore.
“I was really hoping to go for that *White One* who may or may not actually be summonable.”
She had done all that yet still failed.
The time limit must have arrived because the petrified shrine maiden returned to being the original vessel. It was a woman in her early 20’s with a silver bob cut. Her entire body was tightly bound by black leather belts

and other restraints to ensure evil and vengeful spirits did not hijack her body. On top of it all, she had a metal ring around her head at the forehead. The inner edge was covered in metal plugs, so it may have been based on a crown of thorns. It seemed strange and extreme even if it was used to tune her. That may have been a sign of the burden placed on the vessels to repeatedly bind contracts with the 15 children.
Humpty Dumpty did not seem to care.
She had mentioned a “gray dead-end”, so she simply saw starting over from the beginning as the fastest route to what she wanted.
Yes.
Starting over.
“Now.”
Claudia tapped at her temple through the spacesuit’s protective shade.
She was probably smiling.
“I’d like to start Round 2 while I’m still in the right mindset and before the engine cools. Yes, yes. I feel like I can reach that White One right now. I can see the chain leading me there. I can see the path to building that mountain. So how about you give me the chance to do that, siblings?”
“…”
Kyousuke glared at her and the spacesuit moved her parchment Blood-Sign to the side.
She pointed to a pile of rubble.
“I don’t care who, but someone bind a contract with the one buried under there. Her bones might have broken and her organs might have been crushed, but none of that should matter once she turns into a Material inside the Artificial Sacred Ground. As long as I have a summoner and a vessel to fight, I’ll give you the privilege of being the foundation to my success.”
“…And if we refuse?”
“I’ll crush you and find someone else to use.”
Shigara Masami had said this strayed from the main point of the Miniature Garden, and she was right. The project was meant to bring the 15 together as a single family, but at some point, they had been swallowed up by their power in the Summoning Ceremony and by the ranking board.
And it all revolved around the word “white”.
Kyousuke glanced to the side. The threat of the Summoning Ceremony using Incense Grenades and Blood-Signs was truly astounding, but it only worked if a certain process was followed. If those conditions were removed, the Artificial Sacred Ground would fail to establish and they could escape. But could he do that while bringing along Biondetta, who had fallen to the ground, and Kyoumi, who was frozen in place? And even if they escaped for now, would they ever find peace in this gigantic but closed space? They would eventually be cornered. It was only a matter of sooner or later.
And more importantly, wasn’t striking back and defeating her the more “surefire” method?

His right hand subconsciously started to move.
He was aware he had begun to seek the power to fight in the form of a Blood-Sign.
And then…
“Oh? That’s perfect then. Come have some fun with this madman here.”
His thoughts were cut off by the sound of a small metal can being thrown.

It was an Incense Grenade with the pin pulled. Someone had stepped forward when they all should have fallen back.
Once it detonated, a 20 meter cube was cut off from the world and the summoner and vessel were sucked to the center. Who had stood before top-ranked Humpty Dumpy?
It was the Hatter.
Alberto S. Divinesmith.
He lazily wore a suit and a small straw hat, and the spacesuit scoffed when she saw him.
“Do you understand your position here, sacrifice?”
“Have you never read the Lewis Carroll story our names are from? It’s a kid’s book, so you don’t even need to be knowledgeable or educated to be familiar with it.”
It was a giant coffin and not a person who stood by the Hatter’s side.
When he rapped the back of his brown hand on it, the double doors of the coffin opened to reveal the many plugs inside.
It looked like a torture device skewering every part of the girl in thin pajamas inside.
It was the world’s most well-known torture device, but no original actually existed. Its name alone had become something of a legend as it spread fear all on its own.
It was the iron maiden.
“Humpty Dumpy had a great fall. And he couldn’t be put together again.”
That was their cue.
The black-haired girl slipped out of the torture device and the Hatter did not hesitate to charge full-speed toward the dead-end of death.

Part 5

To get straight to the point, the battle was over in an instant.
The 60cm three-dimensional Rose made up of 216 red Petals appeared at the midpoint between Alberto the Hatter and Claudia the Humpty Dumpty. 36 fist-sized Spots appeared throughout the Artificial Sacred Ground. By hitting their own White Thorns with the tip of their Blood-Sign to knock the Petals into the Spots, they acquired the letters needed to spell out the names of the gods. While focusing on the three-way stalemate of the low, middle, and high Sound Ranges and on the Cost that referred to the number of letters, their summoned Materials constantly changed form in order to hold the advantage.

Or that was how it should have worked.
It fell apart from the very first assumptions.
It happened right after their first White Thorns struck the cubic Rose and sent the red Petals scattering in every direction.
“Wha-…ah!?”
It was Biondetta who cried out while watching from the floor.
As soon as Claudia Shiroyama twisted her parchment Blood-Sign’s grip in a half rotation, a smokescreen spread from the bottom with fierce intensity.
And it was not just normal smoke. It must have had a polarization to it because the color of the light changed as it passed through the smoke.
It turned red.
It was the exact same color as the Petals rapidly bouncing around.
“They vanished…” Kyoumi sounded dazed. “The Petals vanished into the background…!?”
The trick itself was simple. Sample problem sets for entrance exams would sometimes place red cellophane over the sheet to hide the answers written in red, but this was the same. If only red light was allowed through, red things became invisible. That was all it was, but it was tremendously effective. If you did not know where anything was, your White Thorns were entirely useless.
(But I doubt that’s all.)
Claudia Shiroyama always wore a white spacesuit with pink lines. With its protective shade meant to block out harmful cosmic rays, she could select a specific wavelength of light to view. That meant she alone could see the position of the Petals in that red world.
Summoners and Materials inside an Artificial Sacred Ground did not show up on mechanical cameras or sensors, but there was an exception: binoculars, telescopes, and other analog optical devices one peered through with the naked eye.
“Didn’t I tell you?”
This was how she had so soundly crushed the ferocious Jabberwock.
She had settled things before skill even came into the picture.
“Do you understand your position here, sacrifice?”
But Kyousuke had a comment of his own in his surgical gown and pants.
He did not hesitate to voice it.
“How naïve.”
With a series of impacts that sounded like a thunderclap, the Hatter swiftly knocked Petal after Petal into the Spots.
Humpty Dumpty had set up the trick, so it was likely her who sensed just how superhuman this feat was. She alone could see the world properly though her spacesuit’s protective shade. But it did not seem to matter that the polarized smokescreen had created a world of red. One after another, White Thorns secured a Petal. With each collision, a primitive song of destruction played while the Hatter’s stock grew. Humpty Dumpy had to have felt most clearly how thoroughly he was trampling her garden.

“What…?” muttered Claudia in a daze. “What is going on!? Only I should be able to see the Petals in this world!!”
“It’s not like you have to see them to know where they are. The world of the Summoning Ceremony only requires your eyes when throwing the Incense Grenade at the start,” readily explained the Hatter. “6 x 6 x 6. That’s 216 in all. If you note where all of the letters are on the initial mass of Roses and compare the angle of the White Thorn hit with the layout of the terrain, you can tell exactly where all of them will bounce. You don’t need to see them *if you calculate it all out from the beginning.*”
“…”
It made sense at first.
But it was nearly an impossible contradiction when applied to the macro world of reality. It was like making an argument based on the fictional being known as Laplace’s Demon. But he forced it through so that even rationality had to back off. He used his insane mind to control everything, so it was truly the logic of a madman.
Even in Lewis Carroll’s already absurd and unreasonable fantasy, this blond boy’s character had been deemed incomprehensible by the eternal girl.
Alberto S. Divinesmith the Hatter smiled.
The joy on his face surpassed good and evil.
“And shouldn’t you get to work? My monster’s already getting warmed up.”
“Ah.”
The Serpent that Coils in a Spiral and Wholly Devours (g v – o u – j z – e u – a o – i u – e i – b f – l v z – y x).
Regulation-class. Sound Range: High. Cost: 21.
An already long snake had wrapped its own body like a spring or coil to transform into an even thicker and stronger serpent. At the same time, each of its shiny scales were created from collections of tiny snakes. On the macro level, it grew larger and larger. On the micro level, it grew smaller and smaller. It was like throwing the human mind into a world of infinite opposing mirrors, or like a supercomputer hanging up as it tried to simulate out every last one of the explosive number of possible moves in a game of *go*. It swallowed up the mind of any who saw it, so they froze in place and could not avoid the next attack. That threat guaranteed a critical hit.
“You aren’t worth a Divine-class and the Unexplored-class is entirely out of the question.”
The madman whispered to the poor spacesuit who had been hypnotized before she could even prepare.
“Disappear down the gullet of the Regulation-class at the very bottom, you trash.”
There was no avoiding the result.
The poor loser collapsed to the broken chess board floor of the Mock Battlefield, the Artificial Sacred Ground vanished without a chain beginning, and the Regulation-class regained the body of the girl it had started out as.

The Blood-Sign made from silver coins stacked up into a metal rod came apart, one coin at a time, but they could not be heard striking the floor. They all vanished into thin air.
The ranking board was updated and the new #1 was determined.
“How boring.”
He summed it up in two simple words.
But he was not referring to Humpty Dumpty where she lay on the floor.
He looked around the area where Biondetta and Kyoumi were watching him in shock, where the adults had stopped their rescue operation to stare, and where the adults in lab coats were supposedly in control. He had been referring to all of them.
And then he spoke.
He spoke to Kyousuke alone.
“Looks like only you were able to keep up. As I thought, only you are different from the others. You’re the most normal and yet the strangest. You’re the polar opposite of me since I was insane from the beginning, but you’re looking in the same direction as me.”
“…”
“Come with me, Kyousuke.” The Hatter winked and made an invitation.
“You can choose when since the two other vessels are out of commission. But make sure you come with me. Fighting the Mock Turtle or the Knitting Sheep wouldn’t help me at this point. It’d only be any fun with you.”
“And if I refuse?”
“That’s fine.”
That was the opposite response from Humpty Dumpty.
But…
“If you do that, then live out the rest of your life feeling indebted. Bow your head low, smile like a fool, and keep your head down until you’re in your grave. Shiroyama Kyoumi, Biondetta. Who do you think came to save you? Hm?”
“Ah.”
That voice of realization came from Biondetta on the floor. She looked like she had just realized she had pushed someone into this.
Kyousuke slowly sighed.
He shook his head and made an honest confession.
“I’m a sucker for that kind of thing.”
“Hah hah!! That’s fine! Only you could decide so quickly to do something as twisted as trying to kill your savior in order to obey that savior’s request! You really are the best. It’s like the faces of our clocks are a mess of a marble pattern, but we still somehow manage to show up right at the arranged time.”
He had said Kyousuke could choose when, but Kyousuke could not be optimistic about this.
It felt like surviving beyond the time his doctor said he had to live.
“See ya, Kyousuke.”

No one could guarantee how long his future would last.
It had already been determined that his life would be cut off by a cliff at some point.
“I look forward to it.”
He was Rank #1.
History’s greatest madman winked and everyone’s train switched over to the track leading to hell.

Part 6

Each of the adults in charge of the 15 children tried to interfere with their specimens using a unique social system as a basis.
It could be a school, a hospital, an army, a prison, etc.
The Hatter was inside what looked like a giant die.
It was a perfect cube with each side at precisely 15 meters. The walls, floor, and ceiling were all perfectly white and the lights shined in through a glass material, so the light fixtures were not directly visible. The door was made like a *yosegi* box, so not even the slightest crack remained when closed. It also had no knob for opening on the inside, so it would be easy to lose sight of the exit if one was not paying attention.[1]
The highly unnatural scene worked to destroy the concepts of front and back, left and right, and even up and down.
It was like a studio set meant for composite video or like a room from an old mental hospital.
It was truly an exception among exceptions.
The Miniature Garden was meant to allow minds to grow in a social system. This place focused on that intent and yet swept it all away. It was a bizarre space created from the entirely unethical idea of wondering what happened when all that was taken away.
A brown-skinned boy stood in the center: Alberto S. Divinesmith.
He held something under one arm like a helmet. It was a device befitting the Mad Hatter.
The voice of the adults reached him from somewhere…or rather, from the vibration of the entire space.
“Now, let us begin, Alberto.”
A simple headset would have been enough, but they went out of their way to carry the physical voice in from another distant room. It was known as a speaking tube. It used the same idea as a stethoscope and carried the vibrations of the voice through a metal tube.

“Once you put on the Silk Hat, we will begin the experiment at our discretion. As usual, we will not be telling you when that is.”
“Sure.”
It had a pearly glow like a thick alloy diving suit. It had the silhouette of a bowler hat, but it was actually a fancy blindfold meant to fully cover his head and cut off most of his senses.
The Silk Hat had a large glass lens on the front and an earhole on either side. Once he put it on, everything looked small and distant, like he was looking through a telescope backwards.
But that was not the point of the hat.
Springs and gears were used to periodically seal off his eyes and ears.
The “window” might open just once every three seconds, so the subject would need to desperately memorize the scene and then move based on the memories burned into their mind like a photograph.
Meanwhile, the hands of the clock continued moving in the real world.
The subject would correct their movements each time the window opened every three seconds, so it was a lot like artificially having their senses slowed by three seconds.
So what kind of experiment was this time shift being used for?
As soon as Alberto donned the fancy hat and sealed away his senses, a portion of each wall slid open and men armed with body armor and police batons stepped in. There were more than 20 of them. The collapsible batons were long enough and heavy enough to be even more dangerous than metal bats.
But Alberto did not even pull out his silver Blood-Sign.
With his head still entirely covered by the thick hat and only a single lens to see through, he held out his right hand and gently beckoned them forward with his index finger.
“You’re insanely polite about all this, dogs,” he spat out.
Immediately afterwards, the batons roared toward him from every direction at once.
But the Hatter twisted his body in a world three seconds delayed. He took a step. He rotated his hips to easily avoid the batons swinging toward him from every direction. No, he did more than that. He thrust out his hand and dropped his raised heel. In a series of dull sounds, the men supposedly protected by cutting-edge shock-absorbing materials were knocked unconscious one after another.
The Hatter could not see it all.
The lens allowing him to see and the metal tubes of the earholes were only opened by the springs and gears once every three seconds.
He only experienced equidistant points in time.
And yet he easily kept even a single blow from hitting him.
“You just have to fill in the gaps of the limited footage.”
It was like a sport to him.

No, the Hatter did not refer to this room as a ring or a stadium. He called it the Tablecloth. So to him, anything placed on top of it was not even an animal: it was no more than food.
“I can see the movable range of their muscles and skeleton, where they’ll move in the future based on their center of gravity, where they’re looking, where their fingertips are, and what they’re thinking based on the tension of their facial muscles. If you loosen a screw in your head and release those resources, *you can steal time*.”
Was he focusing on that passage from Lewis Carroll or not?
In the original story, the Hatter had invited the eternal girl to a mad tea party that ignored the concept of time.
The adults sounded both impressed and exasperated as they spoke through the speaking tube.
“Your brainwaves remain unchanged. …You can break through so easily it almost seems silly to monitor them.”
“This is nothing compared to the Summoning Ceremony,” scoffed the madman.
He scoffed while casually wielding violence. His hands flew, his legs roared, and he devoured the food that showed confusion and fear through their thick body armor.
“You have to calculate out everything: the locations of the Petals and Spots, the paths of your White Thorns, the traits of the Material you just summoned, simulations of what your enemy will summon 100 moves from now, the Cost and Sound Range you’ll need to beat that, and everything else. It’s all about calculations. If you’re not insane, you’ll never keep up.”
A normal person would have their hands full simply memorizing all of the Materials.
So there was not even a faint hope of memorizing the thousands or tens of thousands of patterns required to know what led to what, what detours to make when one route was blocked, and what changes to make to match the enemy’s Cost and Sound Range or the location of the Petals and Spots. Not to mention when it all had to be recalled with perfect accuracy while actually moving your body to match.
But he did it.
The Hatter calmly walked through a realm that would drive a normal person insane.
His presence swallowed up everything around him.
Certain mental states could spread to others, as if resonating with them.
It was a form of group psychology.
That may have been why the adults did not meet the Hatter directly.
Before long, he was the only one standing in the white space.
“How boring. Hey, I can give you more time if you want. 5 second intervals? 10? That’s probably a better delay for the world.”
“Hm,” said the voice as if considering it.
Then the four walls opened up once more to send in the preset assassins.

However, these were not protected by body armor.
The speaker was known for his cyberphobia, so they likely were not made of electronics. These men’s flesh-and-blood bodies had clearly manmade bug wings, pincers, grasshopper-like back legs, and compound eye goggles equipped. The bizarre group surrounded the Hatter.
“What if there was a single formula that could break through all of those complex calculations?”
“That Queen?” he spat out. “How boring.”
But he was not denying the existence of such a convenient being.
He had more to say.
“If something like that exists, she’ll naturally fall into my grasp.”
He would be first.
He would arrive before anyone else.
Everyone else had either failed before reaching that point or had failed after partially reaching it.
All alone, he calmly challenged that insane path.

Part 7

In his surgical gown and pants, Kyousuke walked to the Miniature Garden’s Outer Circle which was ruled by the developers and guards. However, he was not there to visit anyone.
The trigger had been pulled by some extremely simple words.
“I-I will protect you.”
Biondetta Shiroyama.
That girl had struggled more than anyone yet fell into his trap more than anyone.
“What does that Hatter matter? I’m your big sister!”
(What am I doing?)
He was aware how far he was straying from his original objective, but his arms and legs continued to move with perfect accuracy. Perhaps because summoners and Materials vanished from cameras and sensors while inside an Artificial Sacred Ground, the Miniature Garden was equipped with surprisingly few digital security cameras. To make up for it, the doors tended to be equipped with artisan-made locks that could not be reproduced by machines, but that was not much of an obstacle for Kyousuke. Even when a single door had several different locks, his two hands and ten fingers swiftly unlocked it.

His destination was the lab run by the adults who were closely connected to Alberto S. Divinesmith the Hatter. That madman's skill was undeniable, but he needed helpers to back him up. It would be fastest to start with someone strongly influenced by his techniques and words.
This was between Kyousuke and Alberto.
If Biondetta carelessly butted in, it was obvious she would be harmed.
So before that happened…
"…"
He sighed and released the final lock.
The vertical line of locks sealing the thick door had been in the double digits, but the work had not taken even 5 minutes.
A card hung on the knob like at a hotel: Do not disturb.
To translate that into the Miniature Garden's words: Any unauthorized intruders will be shot without warning.
"…Like I care."
He cracked the door open and slipped inside.
It was very different from Shigara Masami's examination room. It was a lot more like a metalworking lab. It was crammed full of impressive equipment that did not seem like it could be used on the human body: a lathe, a press, and a variety of other large tools. Masks to keep dust out hung on the wall and an air conditioner with a special thick purification filter was equipped on the room's ceiling. They apparently really did metalwork in this sealed space. It was made under the assumption that it would be filled with metal particles that would gather in the lungs if inhaled.
There were two locked cabinets, but Kyousuke knew what he was looking for without even checking the documents on the glass shelves.
(A theory on distinguishing family from strangers based on how they walk, their mannerisms, and their behavior.)
In addition to facial recognition, research was being done to identify people in videos based on how they walked. Just the way someone stood and shifted their body weight was apparently as uniquely identifiable as their fingerprint or iris. The differences came from the inborn shape of the skeleton and muscles plus the learned traits of their environment. And that meant both were closely connected to their family.
Which meant…
(They're researching how to control all of your muscles according to certain values to trick people into thinking you're 'family'. Or to intentionally throw off that balance so someone will be treated like an outsider. Are they focused on metalwork because their ideas are reliant on the hardware like muscles and bones instead of the vague and formless familial bonds of the heart and emotions?)
He tried picturing the experiments. For days on end, he would have to watch the bewitching movements of artificial arms and legs fixed to a platform and say whether or not it had the familiarity of family. Or would he have to communicate through the medium of conflict with people who were

equipped with those things? It was a psychedelic scene befitting that Hatter's helper.
But it was true this had given Alberto the ability to control his body with utmost accuracy. And his incredible spatial comprehension could be seen as a byproduct of the research to recognize family by sight.
(But…)
That alone was not enough for the Hatter to be so fixated on the Summoning Ceremony.
Something had to have led him to throw out the completion of the family in favor of the ranking board. Either to him directly or to someone around him.
"…"
Kyousuke approached the locked cabinets again.
He unlocked it so easily it looked like it was simply a knob shaped like a lock and he slid the glass cover aside.
One of the cabinets had a handheld radio. It was presumably to communicate with Alberto, but the diaphragm was surprisingly connected to an old-fashioned gramophone. The communication records were kept on the kind of wax cylinders that had been in use more than 200 years before.
At this point, it felt less like a dislike of digital formats and more like full-blown cyberphobia.
And the other cabinet contained what initially looked like a file meant to hold a stamp collection. The rejection of digital formats continued. Each stamp-sized file appeared to be the negative of an old photo. A lot of data had been compressed onto them.
"Microfilm…?"
Instead of encrypting it, the contents were safe from prying eyes because no one could procure a device to view them in this day and age. It felt like being handed a VHS tape of a music clip rumored to show a ghost on the edge of the screen.
Kyousuke thought for a bit and then looked around the room full of machinery.
He reached for one of the dust masks on the wall.
"I just have to make one."
With that said, he got to work.
He only used parts he found in abandoned-looking boxes, but he could ensure no one questioned their absence by starting a fire disguised as an electrical fire. There were already plenty of electrical problems after Humpty Dumpty and the Hatter had shaken the entire Miniature Garden.
He ended up with a device much like a toy microscope.
He placed the stamp-sized microfilm on the board, shined light on it from below, and peered through the lens. The standard compression rate was around 40x, so each stamp had the same information as a notebook page, each page of the file had an entire notebook's worth, each file had a bookcase's worth, and the entire cabinet would equal a full library.

That might sound impressive, but in a digital format, a micro memory chip a quarter the size of a stamp could hold an entire library and the entire thing could be searched for a keyword in less than 5 seconds.
Only the person who had recorded these and memorized the contents could instantly pull out the data they wanted. Once again, they used inconvenience as a shield. Someone who did not know what they were looking for would have to read through as much data as 10,000 technical books.
But Kyousuke did not care.
“Now, then.”
He started by consuming the contents of around 10 pieces of microfilm while speed-reading through each one in only a few seconds. He built up a profile of the interests and tendencies found there and constructed the thought patterns and decision criteria used by the person who had chosen to record what data where. And he did it to the point that he could tell what they would choose on reflex if suddenly asked to decide on a 4-digit code.
Once he was done with that, he pulled one unmarked file in particular from those lined up on the shelves. He chose the file, page, and piece of microfilm that was the biggest secret and also the most frequently viewed.
After deducing that, he placed it in the microreader he had made.
He got it right on the first try.
“What is this…?”

Part 8

“You’ve gone too far.”
That was the first thing said by Shigara Masami, one of the adults, whose long black hair was held in a ponytail with a scrunchie. In a soundproofed reception room, she sat across a glass table from a man far too skinny for his thick work jumpsuit.
That man was a legend on the same level as Madam Professor.
He was known as Blasphemous Inspiration.
“Akura-san, I know you know the Miniature Garden’s purpose. In fact, it’s strange that a hired-hand like me has to correct you. The White Queen might only appear by accident during the Summoning Ceremony and the conditions for her appearance might be as unexplained as the formation of a tornado, but she is only a stress test for the 15. She is a problem they must face to see if they will stay together as a family instead of breaking apart in the face of trials and disasters. So this is straying from that.”

“I have plenty of counterarguments, but let me hear everything you have to say first. I want to avoid having to repeat myself.”
“We don’t have to achieve it.” The woman in a tight suit and lab coat toyed with the silver whistle hanging at her chest. “The White Queen is best left just out of reach. No matter how high people stack the stones, they can never reach out and grab the sun in heaven. But the attempt will lead them to build an incredibly tall tower. Isn’t that where the Queen’s purpose lies? We still can’t predict what will happen to the comatose Jabberwock after her consecutive defeats. The same is true of the vessel Iris after being buried alive in rubble. And thanks to the battle with the Hatter, Humpty Dumpty herself is near the breaking point mentally.”
“…”
“What is the purpose of the Miniature Garden? If it is to destroy the stated intent of bringing about world peace and bringing mankind together, then shouldn’t we cast aside that detour right this instant?”
Shigara Masami never thought the Fifteen Siblings Project would succeed.
Whatever the plan was, it was the 15 children cut off from the world who were on the chopping block.
She only had to show the other adults that their theory could never be accomplished and then retrieve the children who were no longer needed. That way they could be given a second “proper” life instead of rotting away as the world left them behind or being crushed as the failed project collapsed around them. That had been her intention when she joined the project.
The system was coldhearted and lacked kindness, so she would give it some. She would become the component that did so.
So what was this?
Those ignorant children had been brought into the Summoning Ceremony and made into summoners who would be forgotten by normal people once outside their field of vision. Not to mention that they were being made to seek the uncontrollable White Queen and to attack each other in this closed space.
“What is the main plan and what is a detour?”
But she did not get through to the man named Akura Taisaku, aka Blasphemous Inspiration.
They simply viewed the world and approached the problem in two fundamentally different ways.
“Everyone has their own outlook, but I think conflict is one form of communication. They do say rain hardens the ground, after all. And if they are too afraid of conflict to act on their desires, can we really call that a true family?”
“…”
A clash of opinions sounded all well and good, but was that still true when it came down to family members wielding deadly weapons against each other?

“Also.” Akura Taisaku chuckled at Shigara Masami who no longer even tried to hide her displeasure. “On a more fundamental level, I think our methodology concerning the White Queen is not wrong at all. I am not just saying this and I am not just pretending to understand the formation of a tornado. I truly intend to take control of the Unexplored-class’s peak.”
“…Are you serious?”
“The Unexplored-class exceeds the gods of legend and that Queen reigns supreme above even them. She is the perfect symbol. Such a perfect symbol that she can bring together 6 or 7 billion people. So it is not wrong to use those 15 to find a way to control her. After all, the Miniature Garden exists to monitor those 15 for the good of all humanity.”
“It isn’t possible… No, you mustn’t do it!”
“Normally, no. But if you have a perfect foothold, you can climb a vertical wall. Have you peeked inside the Inner Circle’s gallery?”
That space was often visited by the Queen of Hearts of the 15. It was filled with paintings, sculptures, and other materials related to the White Queen her costume was based on.
But it made no sense to have that much material on the White Queen when she could not be recorded with cameras or sensors and had never been directly witnessed by anyone. Someone would have had to see the Queen, experienced her enough to record her in the medium of paint or stone, and possessed the skill to accurately include the Queen’s symbolism.
Just one of those documents possessed as much information as the scriptures or sacred texts that ruled entire nations or continents.
Shigara Masami squeezed out a low voice.
“You mean someone donated them? You had a patron?”
“It was a person known as the Colorful Museum. They are more interested in collecting out-of-place artifacts and holy relics than in battle, and that collection apparently extends to human beings as well. As long as the divine resides within them, even a human being is a relic.” The jumpsuit man chuckled as he gave his carefree answer. “They also wanted a large testing ground. After all, the pacifists keep too watchful an eye when it comes to the White Queen. Without a cover story like this, we would receive nothing but criticism once the research began.”
“That’s crazy! Are you saying you didn’t just hijack this project for your own purposes…!?”
“Well, you see…”
Akura Taisaku tapped his fingers on the top of the glass table.
He was drawing attention to Shigara Masami’s phone that she had placed there.
“I am sick of letting *these things* rule humanity. I want to take action before they entirely cover the world. I just about jumped for joy when I first learned that summoners and vessels inside an Artificial Sacred Ground vanish from all cameras and sensors, but that is still not enough. Man must

grow even stronger. Before *these things* cover the world and we become mere hunks of flesh that only pretend to think.”
“…”
“15 is not enough. Extracting useful data from their pretend family won’t be enough. It will provide us with a large fortune, but *these things* will cover the world before we can bring the benefits back to humanity. I will do anything to prevent that. I will dirty my hands in any way. After all, this facility was made to consume those 15 in order to save humanity from the ruin we have long seen coming.”
As soon as he finished speaking, the entire Miniature Garden shook.
It was like a duplicate of the last time. As an unpleasant feeling built in Shigara Masami’s chest, the madman in a jumpsuit finished his rant.
“Alberto the Hatter is my greatest masterpiece. So he will reach the peak of the peak. This Miniature Garden only needs to be an egg waiting to hatch.”
“Even though you know you will be swallowed by the cracks when the shell is broken?”
Akura tilted his head at that.
And Blasphemous Inspiration answered.
“Is that supposed to be a problem?”

Part 9

Kyousuke read through the document printed on microfilm.
It was more than just a definite method of summoning the White Queen who was the secret among secrets and who only appeared by accident while towering above them all like a tornado. This was a method to sew her to this world and freely control her.
He clenched his back teeth, but he could not stop the words from escaping.
“This is riddled with holes.”
It was impossible. It would never work. It did make sense from a purely theoretical standpoint, but could you actually create a black hole just because you could define what one was? Could you cause the big bang just because you could generally imagine what the big bang theory stated? That was the extent of what he found here. None of it was wrong, but it was far from being a practical blueprint. If they set to work following this, they would at best produce a puff of smoke and nothing more and at worst lose their lives in a random explosion.
These were the greatest minds the world had to offer?
These were the people closest to the White Queen?

Kyousuke once more wondered if the Miniature Garden was really necessary. Was it really worth killing the Queen here? Was it really the right environment to wage a hidden final war while dragging Biondetta, Kyoumi, and the others into it? If the truly powerful had not gotten involved, mightn't they have been attracted to the Queen while being unable to leave the rails of the normal world? Mightn't they have been frustrated but still lived a proper life?
But as soon as he wondered that, a tremor reached him.
"…"
It was just like with Humpty Dumpy or the Hatter. It was probably coming from the central Mock Battlefield where someone was holding a mock Summoning Ceremony battle. No, since the safety features of the ground were not working, he should probably view this as an actual battle even if it was intended as a game.
The room had two cabinets.
The one not storing the microfilm stored lots of wax cylinders and an old gramophone. The gramophone's wax cylinder began to turn on its own and the attached handheld radio began picking up a voice.
"The 15 have begun an unexpected battle in the Mock Battlefield! Please send a team in! Specifically, it's Alberto the Hatter and Biondetta the Cheshire Cat. Were you aware of this or not!? Can we really just watch this!? Their ranks are clearly too far apart! Someone really will die this time!!"
He clicked his tongue without thinking.
(It's too soon!!)
What had happened was obvious: Biondetta had said she would protect him. Would he grab his practice Blood-Sign and rush to the Mock Battlefield now? No, he would be too late. The Hatter was not a summoner who used clever tricks like Humpty Dumpty's smokescreen. Each of his specs was simply too high. It would not even take a few minutes for this to end, so calling in an electric cart and rushing there would not be fast enough.
And there were currently three vessels in the Miniature Garden.
One of those was still lying in a bed in the medical room after she was paired with the Jabberwock and received a fierce attack from Humpty Dumpty. The other two would be in use by the Hatter and Biondetta.
That meant Kyousuke had no way of wielding his power as a summoner even if he did arrive in time.
He could not save Biondetta.
Meanwhile, the worst possible report arrived through the radio attached to the gramophone.
"This is an emergency request! Please give us permission to seal off the emergency gate to the Mock Battlefield!! The Hatter has reached the Unexplored-class, but he hasn't stopped gathering Petals. He's aiming even higher. A portion of the wall was destroyed last time, so who can say how

far it'll spread this time!!" The Hatter was aiming even higher than the Unexplored-class.
Normally thinking, there was nothing higher than that.
But if the framework of normality was removed, only one answer came to mind.
"He's probably going for the White Queen!! He really is reaching for it! It really will appear before our eyes! We have to seal this off before he summons that!!"
"…"
Kyousuke tried to remain calm.
But it was no use.
If the report he heard was true, then Biondetta would die. This had nothing to do with the rules of the Summoning Ceremony. Think about it theoretically. If the peak of the peak had the power she was rumored to have, the safety of the protective circle was no longer a guarantee. Even if he threw out every preconception and let his imagination spread its wings beyond every limit, this would still surpass the limits of his imagination. Predicting what was coming and locking yourself in a small room was meaningless when the massive tornado blew away the entire house.
There was nothing he could do.
Even if he could calculate out the coming tragedy, he could see no way of breaking free.
He would not arrive in time.
Once the White Queen appeared, the Material and Biondetta herself would be destroyed.
"No."
Then he raised his head.
He looked to the microfilm still held in the microreader he had made.
It was true it was all over if the White Queen was summoned by the Hatter. She was the strongest of the strongest and it was said she would settle any battle the instant she arrived, so there would be no chance at all of Biondetta making a comeback. Biondetta would be unilaterally defeated.
But there was another hint there.
Yes.
If the White Queen was summoned by the Hatter.
"No."
He once more looked around the room in his surgical gown and pants.
He viewed the machinery and considered the incomplete methodology contained in the stamp-sized microfilm.
He thought.
There might still be something he could do.
"…No."
It might be a small thing in the face of a greater disaster.
It might all be a farce and it might be better to focus on the plan to kill the White Queen. Either way, the Miniature Garden would become hell once the

Queen was sewn to this world with the Sewn Realm Summoning and the war began. Biondetta's death would only be a matter of sooner or later, so it might have been wrong to risk the overall plan for something so small.
He knew that.
But even so, Shiroyama Kyousuke could not bring himself to crush that small bud of possibility.
(I'll make sure I make it in time.)
That small monster rapidly turned the gears in his head.
All so he could reach a certain answer.
(If I can save Biondetta while also not interfering with the plan to kill the Queen, then this detour shouldn't matter!!)

Part 10

Hidden beyond a thin layer, the truly powerful sat in their dark room with flat-screen monitors covering one wall.
Quiet laughter could be heard from the summoner in charge of Government, the gothic lolita kimono girl named Humanism who had reached the quadruple digits in her Awards.
"We too were hoping for this."
She spoke while watching the disaster in the Mock battlefield.
While watching the ugliness of the adults.
And while watching the young boy who could not remain heartless.
"We were hoping this would all end in failure despite all this preparation. We were hoping nothing would come of this even after gathering together everyone in the world with a dangerous mentality similar to the White Queen. That would mean this world was even more immature than we thought and thus no one will reach the Queen. That would prove just how safe an age we live in."
The man who lazily wore a luxury suit clicked his tongue.
He was the head of Illegal and also Award 0, Open Bluff.
"Ridiculous… So you're pretending you aren't at fault because no one did what you wanted them to? If you had set things up right, you alone could have remained a 'good person' even after tragedy struck."
"Yes. But sadly, that will not happen. The Queen will undoubtedly be summoned in the Miniature Garden."
The girl sighed.
And the ruler of justice continued coldheartedly.

“After all, we provided a powerful re-igniter in case it ended in failure. … Shiroyama Kyousuke, that is why we sent you into the Miniature Garden.”

Part 11

The Mock Battlefield in the center of the Miniature Garden had become a hellish scene.
The number of people was irrelevant. If there were a million people, a million would die. If there were a billion, a billion would die.
Only two people stood on the red and white chess board floor.
Biondetta Shiroyama the Cheshire Cat and Alberto S. Divinesmith the Hatter.
They had both bound a contract with one of the two vessels who were still usable.
The Hatter used the one surrounded by bonds shaped like an iron maiden.
The Cheshire Cat used the one that sat in a wheelchair that looked like a torture chair covered in thorns.
The two vessels would have changed in body and mind as they continually bound new contracts, so they had countless plugs attached to their bodies to forcibly restrict that reaction.
Those vessels were currently transformed into bizarre monsters.
Those monsters were known as Materials.
Biondetta had desperately held her practice Blood-Sign, accurately knocked her White Thorns into the Petals, and built her Material up to the Divine-class. That had taken a fair amount of skill. For one thing, the Divine-class *literally were* the gods of legend. These were the higher beings that were not even guaranteed to descend from heaven when an ancient emperor offered up his empire, held a grand festival, and sacrificed 1000 people. To summon and use one of those as an individual was the same as having the skill to single-handedly challenge an ancient emperor.
In this case, the Divine-class was from the middle Sound Range with a Cost of 7. This virgin god was the protector of the ancient city of Rome who had appeared as a fully-armed maiden from the forehead of Jupiter.
But it was not enough.
Her opponent was simply too great.
The Hatter used his metal Blood-Sign formed from a stack of silver coins, but he was so cheerful he might have started humming if he had let his guard down. He was accompanied by an Unexplored-class. That being existed beyond even the gods.

She was the Lady of “Purple Lightning” that Separates Good from Evil (iu – ao – eu – ei – kub – miq – a – ci – pl).
A skinny girl with sickly pale skin sat in a rusty wheelchair. Purple cloth was wrapped around the important parts of her body and she raised just a single arm and fingertip.
That was enough for “death” to sweep out.
A purple beam of light cut the world diagonally and sliced through the goddess’s shield like it was butter. It was a legendary item that bore the head of a petrifying monster woman, but it was destroyed with ease.
“Kyaahhh!!”
Biondetta desperately tried to restrain her voice while wearing a surgical gown only tied on the side, but it was useless and a shrill scream was forced from her.
She felt like her heart was being squeezed, but she still calmed her breathing and somehow managed to glare at her enemy.
She was scared. She was definitely scared.
If she did not face this, that scary thing would turn elsewhere.
It would turn toward Shiroyama Kyousuke, her “little brother”.
So.
So!!
“…How boring.”
She was cut off by a coldhearted voice.
The Hatter looked to Biondetta with horribly, truly horribly, cold eyes.
Anyone could tell he was a madman, but those eyes seemed to be peering directly into a great abyss no one else could see.
He was not simply viewing the locations of the Petals and White Thorns.
He viewed something much more fundamental and gave voice to his thoughts.
“You’re normal, but nothing more than that. You started and ended with the standard and you never took a step outside it. How cheap. It doesn’t resonate at all. To be blunt, I feel like this was a waste of my time.”
“What…are you…?”
“I’m saying you lack madness. It’s overwhelmingly lacking. We’re using the gods as stepping stones. We’re reaching for what lurks beyond them so we can control them. What greater blasphemy is there? How are we supposed to remain normal? Believing that sanity still has a place here is the most insane thing of all. But it’s the most utterly boring kind of madness that doesn’t lead to anything.”
His words both praised and disparaged madness. They held more than one meaning at once.
The Hatter himself probably did not know what he truly meant.
No…
“He’s the only one.”
Alberto pointed to another possibility.

And in so doing, he thoroughly rejected the dignity of the girl named Biondetta.
“Shiroyama Kyousuke. He’s the only one I can get along with. I can somehow tell he’s standing in the same place as me.”
“!!”
Biondetta moved on reflex.
She was no longer following detailed calculations to victory. She was simply displaying her willpower.
But it was no use.
No matter where she sent her White Thorns or what Sound Range of Petals she hit into the Spots, she could not close the gap with her opponent. The Divine-class and the Unexplored-class were literally on a different level.
Once the Hatter had arrived there before her, she should have lost immediately. And it was not her skill that had kept that from happening.
“Do you really think you can catch up now?”
Alberto was toying with her.
All so he could acquire all of the Petals he wanted and complete the name of a certain power.
“I will reach for the White Queen, the peak of the peak. Instead of using an insane theory, I will bring the madness to this ordered reality. I will add a tornado, a disaster, to my party. Will you still bite at me then!? Will you, Kyousuke!?”
The Hatter launched a White Thorn with the intensity of a lightning strike.
Biondetta did not have the time to spare to interfere.
She could only watch it fly. With a primitive song of destruction, the Hatter secured 21 Petals. And they were not random. From beginning to end, he accurately knocked them all into the Spots exactly in order.
It normally took 100 from the Regulation-class and 50 from the Divine-class. But this frightening method allowed one to directly summon a desired Unexplored-class Material while ignoring those conditions.
And that included the deepest depths of the Unexplored-class.
She might be summoned by accident, but an absolute method of intentionally summoning her during battle had yet to be found.
Unexplored-class. Sound Range: None. Cost: 21.
Due to the equal number of low, middle, and high sounds, this dangerous arrangement should have triggered the penalty known as the Black Maw.
But it was actually the true answer. It was one of the true names written in blood.
The “White” Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
The Divine-class was the gods of legend and the Unexplored-class lurked beyond even that.
And this being stood at the peak of that peak.
Once she was summoned, it was all over.
She was an embodiment of absolute victory.

Biondetta had yet to leave the Divine-class so her vision grew dark. Was she squeezing her eyes shut or was she fainting? She was too confused to tell.
And…
And…
And…
“What…?”
As time seemed to stretch out infinitely, she heard a confused voice.
In her short surgical gown, Biondetta belatedly realized that this was not just one moment extending without end. Time really was moving.
Nothing happened.
That Queen’s wrath did not arrive.
Her darkening vision cleared up. Alberto S. Divinesmith had completed the task perfectly, so he stared at the Lady of Purple Lightning with a look of utter bewilderment.
“I completed it…”
The Mad Hatter shouted at this utterly unreasonable result.
He seemed to be pleading with the strongest he had failed to reach.
“So why aren’t you answering me!? White Queen!!”

Part 12

The answer was simple.
“Your Sewn Realm Summoning is much like a method of sewing a summoned Material to this world and attaching a chain to its neck. Once the connection is made, it can be immediately summoned from the other world while skipping the normal procedure. Just like tossing a fish back into the pond with the hook still in its mouth.”
These words had been spoken by the gothic lolita kimono girl known as Humanism before he had been sent to the Miniature Garden.
“And while you have summoned it, that Material cannot leave of its own free will or be summoned by another summoner on the other side of the world. You can truly sew it to this world and keep it all for yourself. …So if that theory is used to summon the White Queen, she will at least lose the option of escaping like a lizard breaking off its tail. That would be the first step toward truly killing her.”
In other words…
So…
“…”

Kyousuke had blown life into the machinery while listening to the rapid succession of reports arriving through the handheld radio connected to the old gramophone. He mentally filled in the holes in the failed theory that the room's owner had desperately written down and he got to work. He gave form to a devilish tool never before seen and released it like a stain on the innocent world.
He had filled the holes and used that theory for a simple reason.
His own unique theory had been too high level. He could not have reproduced it using the materials on hand, so he had lowered the level to the methods of the room's owner.
Overall, it was a device the size of a basketball.
It had a square wooden frame as a base which supported a perfectly circular silver plate that represented a never-ending surface of water. The wooden frame contained a complex and detailed collection of gears structured much like a music box that would continue playing forever.
It was not known that this was based on the fairy's spring seen in the fantasies of picture books.
It was not understood that this had all started with the desire to make the Materials their equals instead of just weapons to be summoned.
He wondered how this had happened.
He was answered by his memory of the truly powerful's words.
"If we can truly kill the Queen who rules both worlds through fear and chaos, your dream will also come true. All of the Materials being oppressed by her will be freed."
He inhaled and exhaled.
He made up his mind.
He reached for the crank on the side of the square wooden frame and turned it.
He breathed hopeless life into that perpetual motion machine.
And that skipped past the normal procedure.
The boy would finally meet that radiant white light.
The radio connected to the old gramophone gave a chaotic and confused report.
"!? What…? He didn't miss, but the White Queen didn't appear. Does that mean she's really an inviolable being..?"
"The 10 minutes are up and the Artificial Sacred Ground is gone."
"The Hatter and the Cheshire Cat are both alive. Are we still refusing to intervene!? If we're going to stop them, it has to be before they throw the next Incense Grenade!! Give us our orders!!"
He had taken her for himself first.
So not even the Hatter's superhuman skill could summon the White Queen and she would be no threat to Biondetta.
It was the perfect result.
But this was no time to breathe a sigh of relief.
She was here.

Right in front of him.
The girl’s flowing silver hair was bound into twintails. She was a head taller than Kyousuke and she showed off bodylines that went beyond stale terms like “alluring”. Her clothing was pure white and splendidly arranged like a skimpier wedding dress with silver accessories added in places.
It was not an issue of what or how much.
From head to toe, every last part of this girl was formed from concentrated white light.
She surpassed the Regulation, Divine, and Unexplored-classes to stand at the peak of the Unexplored-class. She was the strongest of the strongest and the one and only being allowed the throne. All of the Materials circumvented the laws of the world, but not even they could defeat this one.
Unexplored-class. Sound Range: None. Cost: 21.
The “White” Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
This core of disaster disturbed the balance of both worlds and brought endless chaos and tragedy.
She was the ultimate prize that stood before the studio set of the Miniature Garden, the farce of the Fifteen Siblings Project, the trigger of the Sewn Realm Summoning, and the gathering of the truly powerful who led the three major powers of Government, Illegal, and Freedom.
Killing the Queen was why Shiroyama Kyousuke was here.
He had no protective circle and no vessel by his side. He held no Blood-Sign or Incense Grenade. And even if he had all that, there was no guarantee he could break through. In fact, the difficulty level would not have been set so very high if an individual like Kyousuke could defeat her.
He understood that.
Sweat poured from his body.
Maintaining logical thought was the most he could manage.

“…oth…er…”
She opened her mouth.
Bewitching and alluring was not enough to describe it. Her beauty held such an overwhelming attraction that even an innocent baby or a wrinkled old man might be unable to restrain the urge in their heart when they saw her.
But she gave an innocent smile that belied that appearance. It was the kind of smile that matched a sound effect like “nyah☆”. She had the look of a small child observing her surroundings in shock after visiting an amusement park for the first time.
“Brother!”
With a strangely soft sound, Shiroyama Kyousuke’s vision went dark.
The girl a head taller than him had embraced him, so his head was buried in her chest.
It took even him several seconds to realize what had happened.

A Happy Memory from an Unknown Point on the Timeline 1

A pool.
“…”
Kyousuke stared at that overwhelming scene while wearing swim trunks.
The Miniature Garden’s scale was as unbelievable as ever. There was a 50 meter pool in the center, the oppressive-looking Great ceiling towered far above, and the poolside was quite large. The space felt so very open despite the lack of windows, so it was easy to forget it was all underground.
The indoor pool was not divided into racing lanes or built in a wandering circuit like at an amusement facility.
It was round.
It was a mirror of water with a 50m diameter and the water was given an artificial current along the outer edge.
(It’s all about optimization.)
Kyousuke analyzed it.
Creating a never-ending current made it the same as a tuna breeding farm. Tuna had to continue swimming forever or they would die, so they were allowed to swim forever inside their limited pens. In the same way, this allowed the children to swim for several dozen kilometers in this limited space.

It also created a more hygienic environment. By creating a gentle whirlpool, they only had to prepare filters on the edge of the pool to gather and filter out the impurities in the water. It was a similar idea to a cyclone vacuum cleaner.
(There's probably a trick to swimming along a gentle curve instead of in a straight line.)
"Why are you staring out into space?"
He heard a voice behind him.
It was Biondetta who had split up with him because the boys and girls used different locker rooms.
She wore a pink two-piece swimsuit that looked more like a one-piece split into two than it did a bikini.
"Do you not like the water? Then that's all the more reason to do some warmup stretches. It's too late by the time you regret not doing it. Heh heh. Your big sister can help if you want. Because I'm your big sister!"
"Oh? Is that so?"
"E-explain to me what that lukewarm look is-…actually, never mind. I get the feeling hearing that would just break me…"
Biondetta acted oddly while pressing her small butt to the wet poolside and spreading her slender legs to either side. She had a lithe body, so each time she reached her hands toward one of her feet, her upper body bent in a beautiful curve.
"Kyousuke."
Cosplay Girl Kyoumi arrived a moment later. She was in an all-out leisure mood and wore a white one-piece swimsuit. Even now, she kept on her white twintail wig.
And she held…something under her arm. It looked like a pink curving body pillow. A flamingo face was drawn on the surface, but it may have actually been a more compact version of a banana boat.
Her other hand held a beach ball with a hedgehog drawn on it.
(The Queen of Hearts' game of croquet? The hedgehogs were the balls and the flamingoes were the rackets…)
But as Biondetta continued her stretches, she had her own impression.
"That's obscene! The symbolism is!!"
"Shut up and quit reading too much into this, you perverted girl. Now, do you want the curved rod or the swollen ball?"
For some reason, Biondetta started panicking when the beach ball was pushed into her face.
"Did you have any trouble in the locker room? Those lockers are deadly tricky to get locked."
"Oh, yeah. You have to push in when you turn the key, don't you?"
"Tch. So you knew. I was hoping you'd come crying to me so I could give you a hands on lesson. Oh, and in the girl's locker room of course."
"…"

“Don’t give me that look. We’re family, aren’t we? And at your age, it doesn’t count anyway. It’s too late to lament losing that privilege once it’s gone! But anyway!!”
Kyoumi laughed and threw the miniature banana boat into the giant circular pool. Only then did she remember the current, so she ran after the fleeing flamingo boat and jumped in without any kind of warmup.
Kyousuke had a thought as he watched the various parts of her skin bouncing around.
It was a simple question. If the Fifteen Siblings Project continued and their familial bonds grew, would they stop being bothered by “that sort of thing”? Would they be able to take a bath together or sleep in the same bed? He was not so sure as he viewed Kyoumi’s bodylines which were noticeably growing on a daily basis.
Then he turned toward Biondetta who was stretching her hands out along her legs.
He looked to that girl who had none of those curves whatsoever.
“Well, it already doesn’t bother me that much with Biondetta.”
“Why do I get the feeling you’re thinking something incredibly rude?”
Once she finished her stretches, Biondetta started toward the pool as if chasing after Kyoumi.
He could not imagine she was that stupid, but he warned her just in case.
“Be careful.”
“What are you talking about? I’m the big sister, so I’ll hold you by the hand and teach you to-…dbh!!”
After jumping into the pool, she disappeared.
Kyousuke just about slapped his hand against his forehead.
It was a perfect chest-high depth for a high school girl like Kyoumi, but that meant it was a dangerous depth for Kyousuke or Biondetta. And thanks to the artificial endless swimming lane, it had a formidable current. There were no obvious waves like at the ocean, so it was more like falling into a rapid current where it was too deep to stand.
And if she panicked, it would be difficult for her to recover on her own.
Kyoumi seemed to have noticed, but her flamingo banana boat was a problem. She had no oar with which to fight the current, so she was having difficulty approaching Biondetta.
“Oh, honestly.”
With that mechanical comment, Kyousuke jumped in.
The water that slipped in through the slight gap between his lips was not fresh water. It had a hint of saltiness. It did not sting his tongue and was more like a sports drink.
(The Pool of Tears, huh?)
This was another symbol from Lewis Carroll.
Human cell fluid was different from both fresh and sea water. When combined with saline, they would probably be able to continue their water training without wearing themselves out.

Unlike an actual river, there were no bumps or rocks on the bottom to complicate the water's current. It was an entirely even flow, making it easy to ride the current. Kyousuke swiftly approached Biondetta as she struggled and he reached below her arms from behind and tried to drag her up to the surface.
But then something unexpected happened.
Her superb agility decided to make an appearance at the worst possible time, so she suddenly turned around and clung to him in desperate fear.
She was too panicked to care that she was pressing her undeveloped body against him and wrapping both her arms and her legs around him.
It was a lot like she was clinging to a log, but this kept Kyousuke from moving. It was a stereotypical way for a rescuer to become a secondary casualty.
(She's only restricting my arms and my waist. At least I can still use my legs.)
It was a silly situation, but it was still a deadly one.
But Kyousuke mechanically grasped what was going on, used his legs to maintain his position, and managed to bring their heads above water.
"Pwah! Aw, aw, aw, aw!!"
"Biondetta."
"Uuuughhhh!!"
"Biondetta, don't worry. I won't let go, so can you at least remove your legs?"
She did not respond.
In fact, she only clung to him even together.
She was apparently too panicked to listen rationally. If he could have used his hands, he would have tried stroking her head or back, but they were unfortunately restricted by her tight grasp.
Their hearts beat together in the water and they floated along treading water for a while until they finally came across Kyoumi on the banana boat.
Instead of approaching them, she had stopped herself near the poolside to let them float to her.
"Sorry, sorry. I panicked and took too long to respond. I'm deadly sorry. Yeah, I should have abandoned the boat and swam over like normal."
"At least nothing happened."
"That's all that matters. Then again, I've heard that Biondetta can *hold her breath for 15 minutes*, so I never thought it was that serious."
She casually announced that the upper limits of humanity had been shattered.
That meant Biondetta could keep up an intense infighting rush in boxing for 15 minutes or she could easily run at a sprint for 15 minutes straight. She was truly the master of anaerobic exercise.
But Kyoumi was interested in something else.
"Anyway, Kyousuke," she said while still clinging to the banana boat. "You know a very strange way of swimming."

“?”
“*Isn’t that a military style?* It was developed to remain afloat with just your legs so you can hold your equipment overhead and cross a river without getting it wet.”
Kyousuke could not carelessly respond.
He could easily say the grownups had taught it to him, but if Kyoumi went around and found out that none of them knew this way of swimming, that explanation would fall apart.
There was a risk of her seeing through the thin layer to the Miniature Garden’s true purpose: killing the Queen.
“More importantly, can you deal with Biondetta? I don’t have infinite stamina.”
“Oh, that’s right. I’ll let her onto my boat. C’mere, Biondetta. If the water’s too deep to stand, then welcome to my boat.”
Kyoumi grabbed her shoulders, but Biondetta refused to move.
Did she think her one safe spot was being taken from her?
No, she may have simply been unable to move at all.
She was pressed against Kyousuke with her chin on his shoulder, so he could hear the conflict escaping her lips as a whisper.
“(Uuuh… I can’t believe I’m holding this filthy boy between my legs, but I’m scared and my feet don’t reach. It’s embarrassing, but I can’t let go. Ghhhhh!)”
It would seem they had not built up enough artificial familial bonds to take a bath together.
Although that was actually a relief for Kyousuke.
“This is amazing. It’s like a shellfish stuck to a rock.”
Kyoumi sounded half impressed and half exasperated up on the flamingo banana boat.
She stroked Biondetta’s head, but it had little effect. The girl was still panicking.
“Fine, then. I guess I’ll resort to the deadly magic words.”
“?”
Not even Kyousuke knew what she meant, so Kyoumi gave a mischievous smile.
“C’mon, Biondetta. I know you’re glad you have an excuse, but if you keep pressing that blatantly flat chest against him, he’ll notice how hard your heart is pounding.”
Kyousuke felt Biondetta’s body temperature skyrocket.
Another emotion must have overpowered her fear because she frantically pushed at the boy’s chest to shove him away.
“Y-you have it all wrong! And I’m not fla-…gabh!!”
“Sigh…”
“Sigh…”
It was the obvious result.

Kyousuke and Kyoumi sighed in unison as they watched Biondetta sink when her support vanished so quickly.
The two of them followed the current and resumed the rescue operation.

Facts

- The Relective Graph measures familial bonds. When the 15 line graphs coincide, the project will be considered a success.
- To protect Kyousuke, Biondetta stood up to the top ranked Hatter.
- The Miniature Garden's research gained patrons and sponsors partway through and its nature began to greatly change.
- Shigara Masami knew the Miniature Garden would fail, but if she did not go along with it to a certain extent, she thought the children would meet different tragedies while scattered around the world. She built herself into the system to provide some humanity.
- Akura Taisaku, aka Blasphemous Inspiration, is an extreme cyberphobe, so he is trying to carry mankind to new heights based on faith and the occult before the world is filled with the internet and email. However, the summoning system he created is full of holes and unusable.
- Kyousuke took the White Queen from Alberto and executed the Sewn Realm Summoning to rescue Biondetta.
- And he achieved it. He summoned the White Queen to this world in her perfect form and sewed her there.
- Upon being summoned, the White Queen immediately referred to Kyousuke as "brother".

Stage 02: A Certain Boy's Warm Days, Both Sides

"What about Alice (with) Rabbit?"
"Now we'll never be separated again!!"
(Stage 02 Open 10/07 22:00 "Before the War")
A Certain Boy's Warm Days, Both Sides

Part 1

A month passed.
"Wait, Kyousuke."
In a room the size of a midsized movie theater in the Miniature Garden's Inner Circle, a muffled female voice spoke through a spacesuit colored white with pink stripes. The girl inside was supposedly a Scandinavian beauty, but was that really true?
"Stop ignoring that Queen and go look after her."
"…It's not like she belongs to me."
"You know no one but you can communicate with her. When we talk to her, she only gives that *nyah smile* and repeats the word 'brother'. I doubt that monster even understands her ABCs."
Kyousuke mussed up his bangs.
Instead of the thin surgical gown, he now wore a red and black T-shirt and shorts. It was apparently the uniform of some soccer club or another. When they had seen him refusing to change out of the surgical gown because he only cared about functionality, Humpty Dumpty and the Dodo had dragged him into the walk-in closet, argued that he could not reject something if it was even more functional, and forced him to try on several outfits. This was one of those.
Yes, Kyousuke had started interacting with them.

While isolated in his group with Biondetta and Kyoumi, they had seemed like inhuman symbols of siblings, but once he started speaking with them, he found they were normal (if oddly dressed) people.
“So where is the Queen…?”
When he sighed and asked that, the answer came from a girl far younger than his 10 years. She was Shiroyama Junri. Perhaps because she had drawn the card for the Duchess, she forced herself to wear bewitching Western mourning clothes. She also wore crossed sash strings to carry a baby doll on her back.
“She’s struggling to reach something in the kitchen. Oh, I mean the one in the west block. Even with those specs, she apparently starts crying when she can’t reach the chips on top shelf. But those wouldn’t be very good for her health, so helping her would be neither here nor there.”
“That’s not quite how you use that phrase. And I can’t believe her. It wasn’t that long ago that she got flipped over in an empty bathtub and couldn’t get out.”
None of this sounded like the actions of the strongest of the strongest and the peak of the Unexplored-class.
But Claudia Shiroyama explained the law of nature behind it like it was obvious.
“That monster just wants you to go help her. You’re her knight in shining armor, so go galloping over to her.”
He did not know how serious they were about that, but it would be a major problem if he caused her to lose her temper *which he had never seen her do*. It was possible the entire Miniature Garden would collapse and bury them all alive.
After getting over his exasperation, Kyousuke finally opened his mouth.
“Then I’ll be going.”
“Sure thing. That’s how boys are supposed to act.”
The spacesuit laughed in response.
He had never expected they would be laughing together like this.
And it was more than just Humpty Dumpy in her white and pink spacesuit. It was everything. Somehow, the Miniature Garden seemed different from before. The Relective Graph showing their bonds was much more calm and stable and their lines were grouped much closer together. The tense atmosphere had vanished and the reason…no, the trigger could not have been more obvious.
The White Queen had appeared and been fixed in place.
Just before leaving the large room, Kyousuke glanced at the screen so large a home theater could not hope to compare. The lights were on and the screen had vaguely lost its outline, but it clearly showed a list of names.
It was the usual ranking board.
Except none of the 15 paid any attention to it anymore.
“…”
The world was surprisingly hard to destroy.

It had not audibly fallen apart as soon as the White Queen appeared.
It had been novel, disconcerting, and a lot like being in the same room as a bomb that should have exploded but did not. He did not want it to explode, but he could not relax while it did not either.
It was an uneasy feeling.
And much like the suspension bridge effect, it brought waves of various emotions to Kyousuke.
“Kyousuke-kun.”
A graceful woman’s voice reached his ears.
He turned around to find a developer in a lab coat and tight suit approaching.
It was Shigara Masami, aka Madam Professor, a developer from Government.
“What brings you here?”
“Nothing really.”
She had viewed the Mock Battlefield in the same way as Kyousuke, but she finally spoke.
“I think it’s a good thing.”
“?”
“However it happened, all conflict has vanished. I think you should honestly accept that fact, no matter what everyone else says.”
“…”
“Ah ha ha. I am a little sad fewer kids are coming to my classes now that ‘that girl’ showed up, so you’re my mental oasis for continuing to attend. Bye.”
She laughed, spoke, and left.
Kyousuke could not move for a while.
However it had happened, all conflict had vanished.
It was the white.
That being had done it.
The rankings had ceased to be updated on that day.
That meant they had all stopped holding mock battles at the Mock Battlefield.
They had reached the Queen.
Now that their goal had been achieved by a different method, the giant facility was simply drifting in the wind like a cicada shell or a dried flower.
This was now a world devoid of conflict.
It was a peaceful world where the family did not need to fight itself.

Part 2

Perhaps their initial assumption had been wrong.
Perhaps the White Queen would not necessarily destroy the balance and spread endless destruction.
Yes, just like the current situation.
Perhaps the Queen could end all conflict and save people if she was used correctly.

Part 3

When Kyousuke entered the kitchen bordering the cafeteria in his T-shirt and shorts, he found the situation had changed somewhat from what the 7-year-old Duchess had told him.
The “White” Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
The twintail girl who truly was mankind’s ultimate weapon had given up on the potato chips on the shelf and was instead crying down on the floor.
“Wahhh.”
It was like “that” was the only word she could say.
It was like some kind of seal had been placed on her.
“Wahhhhh. Brother, brother…”
But when Kyousuke walked in, she started using new words, like a switch had been thrown. She suddenly seemed to understand her ABCs.
“Ah! Brother!!”
The tears vanished in an instant.
With the full-faced smile of a small child, she did not even bother getting up and dragged herself across the floor to reach Kyousuke.
“Where did you go!? And I want to eat the quatro cheese flavor. That white crunchy stuff!”
“…”
———Kill the Queen.
———Eliminate the source of the conflict that will destroy the balance between the two worlds.
“What is it, ****?”
“Well, well you see…”
The White Queen shook her head while wrapping her arms tightly around Kyousuke’s waist.
She shook her head fiercely.
“Everyone’s so mean to me.”
“?”

“They say I shouldn’t bother you. They say the strongest of the strongest shouldn’t have so much trouble with these things. They say I should do everything myself. They say I should stop playing around with this *creepy* civility and instead show off the power of the strongest.”
She sniffled.
She pouted her lips in a way not even Kyousuke would.
“They say I can’t be part of your family since I’m not one of the 15. They say I can’t stay with you because my lifespan is different from a human’s. They say a summoner and a Material can’t be together.”
———Deceive her for that.
———Win her trust, earn your freedom, and pave the way to a miracle that lasts but a moment.
“Y’know, ****, that isn’t going to happen.”
“Really?”
“Really.”
“Really, really? You aren’t going anywhere, brother?”
The small boy looked up at the girl’s red and swollen eyes and nodded just once. He did not need to think about it at all. It was the carefree answer of someone confirming the obvious.
“We’re never going to change and I’m not going anywhere. I’ll stay by your side, ****. If you’re that worried, how about we make a promise?”
The boy in a T-shirt and shorts held out his right hand’s little finger.
“?”
“We make promises like this. It’s called a pinky swear.”
“What kind of effect does this ritual have, brother?”
“Well.”
———So that promise was broken from the moment it was made.
———You had lied from the moment you swore not to lie.
“If you break your promise, you have to cut off your own finger.”
Little finger wrapped around little finger.
He used a chair to reach the snack bag on the top shelf and that was enough for the strongest being to jump for joy.
“Brother! Then, then! Let’s eat it together. I want to have a party! If you open the back of the bag vertically like this…”
He perfectly smiled.
He perfectly accompanied her.
He perfectly found topics for conversation.
Once it was over and the White Queen continued to follow him around everywhere, he asked her to wait in his room.
And once her back disappeared, Kyousuke breathed a quiet sigh.
The sound of his fist hitting his own cheek rang through the Miniature Garden’s passageway.
Humans were truly unreasonable creatures, so there were times when they could not be perfect.

Part 4

The truth was found hidden behind a single thin layer.
In that dimly-lit room with a wall lined with flat-screen monitors, the gothic lolita kimono girl known as Humanism laughed.
“How young of you, boy.”
There was clear scorn in her voice, but also a hint of sadness.
That monster had achieved Award 2799 and she had extended her roots of experience out to the limits of the world she could perceive, so she released prophetic-seeming words.
“That is something everyone considers, but that no one can achieve. Surely you knew that before you arrived at the Miniature Garden.”
“Keh,” spat out the king of Illegal who rested his crossed legs on the table.
“And you call yourself Humanism? You claim to praise humanity, but you don’t seem to understand human beings in the slightest.”
“Oh?”
“There’s one thing that humans will seek even if they know it’s wrong: an ideal. We aren’t machines that can throw out all the rusted components just because we claim correctness is everything. Personally, I’m relieved. That kid has the eyes of a precision guided missile’s sensor head, but now I know he’s more than just that.”
“That kindness will hinder the plan.”
“Oh, shut up. If you bring about the ideal but lose your heart in the process, that’s just another way for ruin to set in.”
Government and Illegal silently glared at each other.
The atmosphere was too tense for the surrounding operators to even gulp.
They contradictorily wanted their hearts to stop beating so loudly so that they could survive.
The only one with any freedom there was the beauty in a Taoist outfit who had been nodding off.
She was the ruler of Freedom and a resident of the world of sleep.
“But I do see how this situation might not be so bad.” She muttered under her breath while rubbing her eyes. “It’s because the White Queen is so much more powerful than us humans that we don’t end up with a gloomy and sordid situation even with all our weapons. That’s why the humans of the three major powers can speak like this. We don’t attack on our own and we aren’t destroyed on our own. Yeah, mankind is hopeless when we bind ourselves and divide ourselves with the national borders we made up. Ahh, ahh. If only a giant saucer would attack from space…”
It was a hopeless opinion.
But that ruler of the free had dug down to a truth rudely blocking their way.

“…”
“…”
Humanism and Open Bluff looked away.
Once this conflict was over, what came next?
That was the deep, silent, and weighty question. Freedom had given up and decided they did not care what happened, but Government and Illegal each had something to protect. They doubted they could protect it during an all-out war between the three major powers and they doubted the flames of war would entirely vanish even if peace was announced between the three major powers.
They hated the White Queen, but her presence did support something.
“…That is a dangerous idea.”
The representative of Government slowly shook her head.
Thinking like that meant her soul had already been captured by a powerful attraction.
That was what her tone of voice said.
“It’s true I don’t know what the ‘next age’ will look like.” Illegal’s leader sighed and placed a thick cigar in his mouth. “But I want our age to be the last one that places kids with that look in their eyes on the front line.”
A quiet laugh followed.
It came from Perfect Equilibrium who had just about fallen into the world of sleep.
“What a romanticist.”
“Don’t be silly. Someone who can’t fight for their own ideal can’t turn their back on the cold system we call the world’s correctness.”

Part 5

“Mumble, mumble…”
In his T-shirt and shorts, Kyousuke spotted the White Queen in the cafeteria.
She was napping with her head down on a table.
Perhaps because he had helped the queen get the chips down from the shelf and made that promise with her, she was often found wandering around the kitchen or cafeteria. She may have found comfort in that connection to a pleasant memory.
The demon whispered in his ear.
———*This should be a good thing. It hasn’t left the plan.*

————Earning the target's trust is undoubtedly the first step toward assassination.
"…"
The White Queen had a beauty that surpassed divine and seemed to drag his soul away if he looked at her for too long, but seeing her twintails splayed out on the table and the drool dripping from the corner of her half-opened mouth, she looked just like a small child.
He did not know if the strongest of the strongest could catch cold, but he approached and placed a hand on her shoulder.
"C'mon, wake up, ****."
These situations were tricky with a being who had the ultimate offense and defense. She could shrug off an attack from a being beyond the gods, so he doubted a human whispering in her ear or shaking her would be much of a stimulus. He could only be thankful that she did not blow the country off the map when she tossed and turned in her sleep.
"Nnn."
So when the White Queen said that, he doubted it was due to his futile efforts.
Was she half asleep or was it some kind of reflex?
She did not open her eyes and she sleepily shook her head before placing her lips around Kyousuke's index finger.
"…"
"Mhh…hhh…"
She gently bit it with her white teeth and licked at it with the tip of her tongue.
Instead of a small child, she was now more like a baby with a bottle placed in front of her.
He let her do it for a while, but then he tilted his head and spoke again.
"…What are you doing?"
"Zzz…hm? Brother???"
Even after opening her eyes, she did not remove his finger from her mouth. She acted just like a kitten being loved on by its mother.
"I'm hungry…"
"If you need nutrients, I can get you a vitamin pill or a gelatin drink."
"Mhh, mhh! Brother, isn't there something else?"
"…Hm."
Kyousuke was honestly not that interested in food. He took the White Queen into the kitchen with him and spotted…
"Oh, they have canned foods."
"Rejected."
"I've heard hardtack doesn't actually taste that bad these days."
"Double rejected."
She opposed every one of his ideas like that.
There was only one thing left that Kyousuke thought he could fix for her.
"Cereal?" she asked.

“Yeah. You just have to pour it into a bowl and add in the milk from the fridge.”
There was no real meaning to it.
He thought it was just one of the options she would reject.
But the White Queen did not react as expected.
“Okay, that should work.”
“?”
“Heh heh heh. This is the first meal made for me by my brother!”
He had not “made” anything. He had only poured cereal and milk in a bowl and stuck a spoon in it, but the White Queen was so delighted that she started eating it right then and there without carrying it back to the cafeteria.
So Kyousuke decided to protest a little.
“Wait.”
“No. It’s too late to take it from me now!”
“Not that. I’m not too knowledgeable on the subject, but I hear you can put more than milk in. Like yogurt and dried fruit.”
He felt like he had to put in at least that much of an effort.
After he rummaged through the cabinets and refrigerator and added some more ingredients, he realized it now had nearly three times as many calories.
The White Queen smiled innocently, but Biondetta or Kyoumi probably would have punched him in her place.
“More, brother!!”
“Yes, yes.”
“You need to eat it with me, brother!”
However, he did not feel like getting another bowl dirty.
And with all the extra sugar and calories from his additions, it was probably just right to be shared by two.
“Excuse me, then.”
“Ah!”
When he stuck his own spoon in the large bowl, the White Queen blushed for some reason.
“What?”
“The same bowl…eating the same food…that makes this an indirect kiss! This is a day for celebration!!”
“…”
At any rate, the world was at peace.
He no longer had to worry about Biondetta and Kyoumi falling victim to the Summoning Ceremony.
They no longer had to fight with the Jabberwock or Humpty Dumpty.
It was all thanks to the White Queen.
It was all thanks to her standing at the peak.
So…

———Isn’t that great? Now you can focus on killing the Queen with no distractions.
———It’s all thanks to her. You need to thank her.
“…”
The demon whispered in his ear.
The young boy stared at his nemesis and hid all that in his heart.
And he used his reeling mind to think.
What was the right thing to do?

Part 6

The Mock Battlefield had stopped.
They no longer had to repeat those dangerous Summoning Ceremony battles that were too much for the facility's safety features.
That was a good sign.
Or it should have been.
"Tah dah."
A pink-haired girl put her hands on her hips and revealed her outfit to Kyousuke.
It was Biondetta Shiroyama.
She wore something like a white and pink waitress uniform.
"What is that?"
"Heh heh. The Queen of Hearts finally finished the outfit I asked for!"
Biondetta spun around on the spot as if to say, "Look, look!"
She was a waitress with devil horns and tail.
"I'm not sure I get the concept."
"Oh? Doesn't it sound romantic to make a contract and then lend a helping hand in someone's fight? Yes. For example, something really emotional like a fight for revenge or retribution. I couldn't be your big sister unless I was at least that insane."
"…!?"
Something bothered Kyousuke about that.
It was like a smoothly moving record needle suddenly catching.
What had Biondetta just said?
What had she mentioned like it was no more than casual conversation?
"?"
The demon actually looked puzzled. She did not seem to understand what he found so odd.
And before he could figure anything out, the situation continued to develop.
"Oh, Kyoumi."
Biondetta's face brightened.
But the other girl did not even look over. That high school aged girl had somewhat droopy black eyebrows, loved to make costumes, and had made a White Queen one based on the paintings and sculptures in the gallery. She was the big sister they all relied on.
There was no sign of that anymore.
Her head swayed as if her body weight was swinging it around and she muttered something under her breath.
"It's hopeless…"
It may have been wrong to compare them.
It was well made for something put together by human hands.
But the white dress she dragged behind her had frays, wrinkles, and stains in places.
"I was deadly wrong to look up to her. I never should have reached for the sun. Everyone must be laughing at me. They're comparing me to the real one and laughing at me…"

Had she not noticed them or was she just ignoring them?
Shiroyama Kyoumi never did turn around and walked off somewhere.
Something invisible seemed to be tangled around her. And Kyousuke was worried because he had pulled the trigger.
The ranking board on the wall never changed.
It was like the brown dried leaves that stubbornly stayed on the branch even when winter came and they lost their power of photosynthesis.
At the very least, he had not done the wrong thing.
Even now, the 15 were avoiding any direct threat.
“What are you looking at?”
But that lifeless voice pierced through his heart.
He turned around to find someone had approached without him noticing.
That boy’s messy blond hair and brown skin had lost their shine and he looked terribly emaciated, but his eyes alone gave off a bright light.
It was Alberto S. Divinesmith the Hatter.
He had once been – and technically still was – the summoner at the top of the ranking board.
But no one in the Miniature Garden visited the Mock Battlefield any longer, so that meant nothing. And he likely understood that better than anyone.
No.
He may have understood it too well.
“You’re…goddammit…you’re making fun of me. Don’t look at your elders like that. I! I am an undefeated summoner! I am talented!! I haven’t changed!! It’s everyone else who’s changed!!”
“…”
Biondetta shrunk down, but she still stood in front of Kyousuke.
Even after losing the ranking board, she continued to be his “big sister”.
How did that strength – that light – look to the Hatter?
His face twisted, his voice caught in his throat, and he exploded with anger.
“To hell with you! What is…what is with this position!? How did I end up in this miserable position!? I…that’s right…*I haven’t changed at all!!*”
Something could be heard cracking.
The Hatter may have clenched his back teeth so hard one of them broke.
“Do you enjoy hogging the strongest to yourself!? Well, do you, Kyousuke!? The Summoning Ceremony was supposed to be open equally to everyone. If you hadn’t done something weird, the Queen’s power would have been distributed to everyone. You twisted this world!! That’s why…goddammit… that’s why I-…!!”
Just before he raised a fist clenched harder than stone, something else happened.
“Brother?”
The world froze.
Alberto had been boiling like magma, but he came to a stop.
Cracks formed across his heart, as if it could not bear the rapid change in temperature.

It was painful to look at, but anyone would have been the same. His entire body trembled and he bit his lip. He could no longer move. He had built up his brand around being the oldest and an excellent summoner, but that pride was stolen from him.
It was the White Queen.
When she was here, what meaning did physical strength and the Summoning Ceremony have? How could any remain? That monster would end any battle the instant she was summoned, so how could an individual who had her on his side be defeated?
He was #1.
He was the hero of the ranking board.
He saw beauty in his madness and he found value in what no one could understand. He had even placed his own death on the scales and had not hesitated to wear away his own life for temporary pleasure.
That was the monster he should have been.
But he was not.
“□□□!!!!!!”
That shell of his former self could no longer speak a single word.
Kyousuke and Biondetta saw something as they stood in front of him.
That absolute cliff, that summoner who had created such overwhelming pressure, wordlessly wept. But not at the Queen’s intensity. He wept at how worthless he felt when he was unable to do a thing while faced with a threat and standing before a powerful enemy.
He feared for his life.
And someone ranked below him had seen that fear.
Those were tears he had needed to keep hidden.
To him, letting young Kyousuke and Biondetta see those tears was a sin he needed to confess to god.
There was nothing he could do.
The Hatter turned his back and left. He ran off. There was nothing Kyousuke or Biondetta could do either. Those inexperienced children could not have known whether or not they should call out to the back of that fleeing hero.
“Are you okay?”
Their far too cruel savior asked that question.
It was a voice brimming with humanity like that of an older girl rubbing their head. It was very unlike the White Queen and they finally caught on.
“…Kyoumi.”
“Sorry.”
The girl dressed like the Queen crouched down and hugged Kyousuke and Biondetta.
“Sorry for ignoring you before. I didn’t know what to do or how to look you in the eye. But when I heard the Hatter shouting, I finally decided to return. …I could deadly understand when I saw it from the outside. I probably looked the same to you.”

“No, you-…”
Biondetta started to respond with her face buried in the Queen of Hearts’ chest.
But the arms around her and Kyousuke squeezed harder and sealed off those words.
“No. You mustn’t forgive me.”
It was a kind voice.
But there was a tremor of instability in it.
“If you do, I’ll lose the chance to forgive myself. Yes, I’ll be honest. The darkness inside me still hasn’t gone away. I doubt it ever will go away. It might grow or shrink, but…yes…my hatred of you will never completely go away. That’s what I think.”
“…”
“You can think of it as a ridiculous and immature grudge if you want. So Kyousuke…and Biondetta too. Don’t trust me. Don’t turn your back on me. Don’t think I’ve opened up to you. Always keep your guard up, always doubt me, and always keep me away. …Please, I deadly mean it. Don’t show a heartwarming opening and *turn me into* the worst possible sister who lays a hand on her own family.”
What were they supposed to do?
How would a grownup act at a time like this?
Kyousuke and Biondetta had no way of knowing, so they simply hugged their kind sister back.
They did not want to let her go.
But they had to eventually.
While wrapped in that warmth, Kyousuke felt the world, the hope, and the possibility he had imagined rapidly falling apart.
———The Hatter hasn’t done anything wrong and the Queen of Hearts isn’t wrong.
———The White Queen is simply there. She has not actually done anything wrong.
(Then how did this happen…?)
Looking only at the result, it was purely negative.
This vicious cycle would probably continue forever as long as the White Queen remained.
Their brother had his pride torn away and their sister had been crushed by the difference between the ideal and the reality. And if those siblings were like this, then what about the adults who stood above the children? How far was their distortion accelerating?
But…
Even so…
(An evil that does nothing wrong.)
Kyousuke clenched his teeth.
As a mere pawn and as a precision guided missile that had been fired, it may have been wrong of him to worry about this while making a show of

thinking. He had been told who to aim at and to pull the trigger, so there was no reason to stare at and agonize over the list of suspects. It might solve everything if he skipped past all that and faithfully obeyed his instructions.
And yet he could not help but think about it.
He could not help but wonder why the world had been twisted in such a coldhearted way.
(Is defeating her really the right thing to do?)
That night, Shiroyama Kyousuke visited Shigara Masami's lab.
She showed him the Relective Graph.
That line graph measured the 15 children's bonds and changed in real time.
He saw exactly what he expected.
They were completely scattered.

Part 7

Kyousuke and Biondetta were both worn out.
No matter how well-supplied the Miniature Garden was, there was no escape from the *dryness* running rampant there.
There was only one of the Queen.
That was completely normal, but she was so very powerful that even that condition seemed unfair, unequal, unreasonable, and unacceptably absurd.
Why did she not appear to everyone the same?
And that was why Biondetta made a suggestion.
"I'll take you to a secret place."
"?"
His luck may have run out when he went with her.
Waitress Biondetta suddenly started toward the spider web's Outer Circle and he felt a jolt run through his body when she removed a panel on the outermost wall.
(She knows what's hidden behind those walls!?)
That revelation might turn Kyousuke and Biondetta against each other.
The truly powerful might order him to silence her.
But his fears proved groundless.
The removed panel did not lead to a room with flat-screen monitors lining the wall. It only led to a long, narrow smokestack-like hole with a metal ladder leading up it.
"Hurry up. They might seal this hole if they discover it."
"What is this?"

“They probably made a mistake when installing the ducts. These kinds of mistakes are pretty common and I’ve even heard about a time an amusement park’s drinking water accidentally had industrial water hooked up instead.”
In other words, it was a secret route that did not exist on the blueprints. Were the truly powerful unaware of this? Or did they know but had left it be?
After Biondetta ducked in, Kyousuke followed her into the smokestack-like space. The wall panel could apparently be closed up from the inside. Biondetta stuck a pen light behind her ear with a practiced hand and started climbing the ladder.
“Now, let’s get going.”
“Where to?”
“Up.”
After that one-word answer, the little demon smiled and chose another word.
“No, outside.”
It was a long journey from there.
The Miniature Garden was 500 meters straight down from the surface. That rivalled the height of a national broadcast tower. Climbing that height using a staircase would be an event in and of itself, but they were using a ladder. If their grip weakened or their hand slipped on their sweat, they would fall into the emptiness below.
“Biondetta, I’m going to be honest.”
“About what? Your surprise now that you know the secret to my health and beauty?”
“With you climbing first, I can see right up your skirt. Even your panties are striped white and pink?”
He received a serious heel kick in response.
However, they were already more than 100 meters up, so they could not swap positions now.
After some difficulty, they made it to the top.
Their ability to do so was more proof that the Miniature Garden’s children far surpassed the average both physically and mentally. Even if Biondetta was not working for the secret project behind the main project like Kyousuke was, she was still a monster.
She pushed up a square cover to reveal an orange light and a gust of wind. The Miniature Garden was managed even more carefully than the natural world, but being outside still felt liberating.
Kyousuke followed Biondetta out and then stared at the twilit world for a while.
He saw a bumpy hill and tropical-looking trees approaching up to a short distance away.
The wind carried the salty scent of the ocean and a flock of birds flew away overhead.

Kyousuke said nothing unnecessary.
He simply stood there in front of that scenery.
And he spoke a single word with all the pretty fat carved away.
“…Wow.”
“Heh heh heh. That’s the best praise I could hope for! But not so fast. The view looking down from here is the best!!”
Waitress Biondetta pulled on his hand and walked toward the small hill.
The large forest of tropical nature was dyed in the colors of twilight.
No one would suspect that scene of isolated nature actually had an underground world hidden below. The ground was more damp white sand than dirt.
“The land is moving. It was a series of islands when I arrived.”
“It’s apparently called a wandering land.”
Kyousuke stood next to Biondetta and viewed the scenery from the top of the small hill.
The land below was changing form like an amoeba. The land was barely above sea level and there were probably undersea tunnels all over the place. Instead of sinking during high tide, it was impossible to tell where the land or sea would grow, so it seemed to move like a living creature.
“The fine sand carried here from the mouth of a mainland river apparently accumulated like this thanks to the ocean currents. The combination of the tides and the complex currents created by the countless undersea tunnels causes the land’s shape and location to endlessly change.”
When Kyousuke had been taken here, he had seen a string of small islands, but now the orange-dyed sand continued beyond the horizon and the ocean consumed it from within in places. This scene would not continue forever and he could guess it would separate out into a few islands eventually. It was possible the scenery never looked the same two days in a row. As the sea level rose from the tides, islands would respond by periodically sinking and surfacing, but there was no regularity to be found here.
The amoeba-like changes were seen in the shallow accumulation of sand only a dozen or so centimeters above sea level. The entrance to the Miniature Garden they had left through and the bridge spanning the dozen or so kilometers between the distant mainland and another large island were built on the more elevated areas, so they would not be swallowed up no matter how much the land changed.
It looked like land, but it was not land. It looked like an island, but it was not an island. It looked like the ocean, but it was not the ocean.
A single deep shaft opened deep underground in that fantastical place. That strange combination of the definite and the vague played a role of its own. It felt like the entrance to another world.
It had the same mystical feeling as the rabbit hole that the eternal girl fell into. It was said she fell for so long she lost any sense of time and could grab a jar from a shelf on the wall.

“Well, it’s a lot like a knee-height shoal that continues as far as the eye can see, so it wouldn’t be very good for swimming. And just like a shoal, it’ll catch you by surprise when it suddenly gets really deep.”
“That’s not very nice of it.”
“I know.”
The long, long bridge had quite a few vehicles driving on it, but the trucks could not see the children. And the bridge was so long that it was a lot like a highway. There was no exit until the end, so none of the vehicles would stop on the island and yelling would not reach them. Even a professional opera singer could only project their voice 200 meters at best. And as summoners, normal people would forget they existed when not in the people’s field of vision. Whether or not their voices reached did not matter all that much.
But Waitress Biondetta did not seem to be hoping for that.
She was not hoping to be rescued.
For one thing, she had no guarantee there was a place for her in the outside world.
There was a reason each of the 15 had been chosen, even if it was not as important as Kyousuke’s reason.
She held her hair against the chilly wind and viewed the never-ending scenery.
“See? It was worth all that effort, wasn’t it?”
“…It was.”
He answered honestly, so Biondetta giggled while her short skirt fluttered in the wind.
“Given how deep underground we were, this is like climbing a small mountain, so we need a breathtaking view when we look down from the top like this.”
“Do you always do this, Biondetta?”
“Call me Detta. …And they’d notice if I did it all the time. But I end up coming here when I need to cheer myself up.”
That meant this was one such time.
She too must have been affected by the stifling atmosphere.
“Hey, Kyousuke.”
“What?”
“I realized something when I saw how Kyoumi was acting. Or rather, I finally had confirmation.”
She spoke honestly as if she were facing her own sins.
“I hate you.”
“…”
“You have all the power you could want and you could look down on everyone, but you’ve abandoned that card and you *lower* your gaze to our level. I hate you for that. You reject the image of big sister I had imagined and you kindly tore my ideal image of a big sister to pieces. I hate you so very much for that. But part of me doesn’t want it to end with hate. There’s a part of my heart that definitely wants to continue being your big sister.”

He was not trying to do that.
But he had no right to make that excuse.
After all, he held a secret even greater than the truth stabbing into Biondetta's heart. This was all a farce meant to kill the Queen. He knew the project manipulating the 15's lives had been utter nonsense from the beginning.
He had known that, but he had kept silent.
Because he knew they would have to be killed if they learned the truth.
So…
"What am I supposed to do?"
"Well."
He thought she would tell him to stay away from her or to stop speaking with her.
But he was wrong.
Biondetta Shiroyama placed a hand on the center of her chest and made her announcement.
"If I do anything remotely suspicious, kill me right away. I don't care how. You can hit me on the back of the head when I'm not looking or you can face me head-on and crush me with the White Queen. If you do that, I can remain your big sister to the very end."
The supposedly perfect precision guided missile had no idea how to respond.
It was crumbling.
Everything was audibly falling apart.
What was power?
What did it meant to be the strongest?
He could not stop this horrifying trend that was neither good nor evil. He could only watch as everything was swept toward ruin. So could he really say he had all the power he could want?
"I…"
Just as he tried to open his mouth, something happened.
A nearby bush rustled.
"!"
Waitress Biondetta quickly stepped in front of Kyousuke. As always, she was a big sister through and through. Even if that role had been placed on her, she found meaning in fulfilling it.
Kyousuke bit his lip as she protected him.
A large man with long blond hair worn in a ponytail appeared before them. He gave off the conflicting impression of both a nobility enjoying tea in his palace and a pirate wreaking havoc on the seas in his ship.
There was no way they would run into someone with no connection to the Miniature Garden here.
Was he part of the official project, or was he part of the secret project to kill the Queen?

Biondetta glared up at him with a challenge in her eyes, but the blond man only scratched his head in annoyance.
He looked more to Kyousuke than Biondetta when he spoke.
“I’d really rather avoid any trouble, so I’ll pretend I didn’t see anything.”
That answered Kyousuke’s question.
He was from the secret project. Kyousuke had to be careful about what information Biondetta was given. His response here could put her life at risk, even if he himself would be spared.
This man acted like a regal predator.
He was like a lion.
Kyousuke guessed he was from the team meant to kill the Queen. After Kyousuke sewed their prey here, this man’s team would directly kill her.
Those incarnations of violence could overturn the assumption that the battle was over as soon as the White Queen was summoned.
He had a different sort of strength from a scout and spy like Kyousuke.
“Get going already. And be more careful next time. There are some twisted people out there *who actually get excited by trouble*.”
“…”
Kyousuke did not speak his mind.
Even a yes or a no would let Biondetta know he was on a similar level to this man. And that would be bad. Not for Kyousuke, though. It would be very, very bad for Biondetta.
He would not let her be silenced.
He would not accept any order to kill her.
He would protect her.
He would protect his family no matter what.
Was it wrong to feel that way? Would it be easier if he simply made an “adjustment” to match the situation?
He turned his back on that logic.
No. He did not want to get rid of that anguish.
He did not want to erase the part of him that worried for his family.
The blond man must have seen the iron will in Kyousuke’s eyes because he did not say anything more. He calmly walked past the two children and disappeared into a different part of the woods.
Kyousuke slowly exhaled.
But then some words stabbed right into his heart.
“…I’m just not cut out to be a big sister, am I?”

Part 8

And in the twilit forest, the large blond man lightly punched a nearby tree trunk.
“What is that brat doing?” he spat out in irritation. “He’s way too cool…”
The fine tropical sand and the solidly healthy trees were beautiful, but they also absorbed his low voice. The wandering land phenomenon was incredibly rare, but the constantly changing shape of the land made sea charts useless and lots of ships would run aground. That weight hidden behind the beauty may have swallowed the man’s groan.
They had built the Miniature Garden here for a reason. The wandering land made it even less likely than on a desert island that someone would accidentally find their way inside, and it also did not stand out as a dangerous location. Some people went out of their way to challenge the world’s abandoned and dangerous locations. An obscure and fairly uninteresting sightseeing location had been ideal.
Then a transmission reached his radio.
It was from one of the predators hiding in the forest and waiting for *that time* to come.
“What is it, Claude? You’re late to check in. Did something happen?”
“No.” He looked back just once and then smoothly lied. “Nothing happened. How much longer until everything’s ready? I’m sick of napping in the trees and holding barbecue parties.”
“Don’t say that. It’s childish.”
“I suppose so.”
“Oh? You’re awfully reasonable for the heir to the prestigious *Magentarain* family.”
“Screw that.”
Claude Magentarain.
That ace of Freedom had once turned his back on an easy life to give a girl a life of her own. He did not hesitate to spit out his next words.
“It’s because I was sick of that stuff that I left my Government home.”

Part 9

“Brother.”
The White Queen asked an innocent question while jumping on the bed in a private room of the Miniature Garden.
This was a casual time that only Shiroyama Kyousuke could experience.
“Why are you a rabbit, brother?”
“Because of this.”

In his T-shirt and shorts, Kyousuke grabbed a largish card from the study desk and waved it around.
“It was the role I drew at the beginning. It’s probably a form of tarot.”
Tarot might make people think of magic cabals that adopted the symbols of the color gold, of roses, and of the secret techniques of the Roma, but there was not actually a single definitive version. There were quite a few original versions based on different legends such as Greek mythology or the Mabinogion.
The version used in the Miniature Garden was based on Lewis Carroll’s masterpiece.
Not even Kyousuke knew where to ultimately set his sights now that those 78 cards had been shuffled. After all, not even the adults would have expected for the White Queen to take physical form and walk freely around. The eternal girl could not be controlled by human hands.
In that way, the failure of the cards may have pointed to the truth.
“…”
But even if he explained all that, the innocent White Queen would only tilt her head.
And he also needed to explain Lewis Carroll’s masterpiece to her.
But even if the title was known around the world, it was a story that played fast and loose with a traditional story structure. Even as Kyousuke told the story to her, he often found himself frowning and wondering if he had it right or if he was remembering it wrong. He still could not see why society at large appreciated that aspect of the story, just like enjoying the bitter innards of a roast fish.
The White Queen continued jumping on the bed from beginning to end. Although it was hard to tell whether she liked Lewis Carroll’s story or if she simply enjoyed speaking with Kyousuke for so long.
“In other words, you’re the rabbit and I’m the eternal girl.”
“Hm? No, that’s not right. Alice came from the original world and fell into wonderland. That doesn’t apply to you, ****.”
“Yes, it does.”
She pointed at her own puzzled face.
“I fell from my original world.”
Then she pointed at Kyousuke’s face.
“And into your world.”
“…”
That was another way of looking at it.
The real world and the other world were only called that from the viewpoint of Kyousuke and the other humans living on earth. For the Queen, “over there” was her original world, so she had indeed met a rabbit in wonderland.
Was that the meaning of the cards?
By sending the various “roles” at the eternal girl, were the adults hoping to trap her in the story and control her?

No, things were too confusing to think the adults had planned all of this. There had to be a gap between what the Miniature Garden knew and what the truly powerful knew. And the hidden group trying to kill the Queen did not think it was possible to control her.
But the symbolism was still eerily accurate.
Almost like some slight humanity had slipped inside the coldhearted system.
“The rabbit,” repeated the White Queen.
Then she started rejoicing all on her own.
“Ee hee hee! Then, then! Please guide me around to even more places tomorrow. For being called a Miniature Garden, this place is way too big. I want you to grab my hand and show me around to all the best places! It’s been a month, but there’s still a bunch I haven’t seen!!”
“…That’s right.”
“And we can’t have two different names. That makes it sound like we exist separately.”
She started sounding as ridiculous as Lewis Carroll’s story.
And as she childishly pouted her lips, the White Queen clapped her hands in front of her chest and made a suggestion.
“Then how about this!? We can come up with a new name that lets us be together!!”
“Hm?”
“Let’s see…”
She began to think.
And the peak of the peak redefined Shiroyama Kyousuke thusly…

Part 10

“What about Alice (with) Rabbit? Now we’ll never be separated again!!”

Part 11

The central Mock Battlefield was not alone in becoming an empty shell, like a cicada shell clinging to a tree.

The adults should have been busily moving about in the Outer Circle, but the many laboratories had completely ceased functioning.
The Fifteen Siblings Project.
That grand project was meant to bring all races and peoples together into a single family to end all conflict between those 7 billion people.
But it had faded away in the face of the White Queen.
And it was obvious why the project itself had not actually been canceled.
They did not want to waste this. The penicillin extracted from blue mold had been discovered when it accidentally got into the Petri dish being used for a different experiment. The White Queen existed in a miraculous balance and there was no guarantee they would receive the same result if they tried again in an identical Miniature Garden, so they could not take this one apart.
Shigara Masami breathed a deep sigh at their situation. As always, a scrunchie held her black hair in a waist-length ponytail and she wore a lab coat over her dark blue tight suit.
The Miniature Garden project would fail sooner or later.
That was fine. Her goal was nothing as grand as saving the human race. She only wanted to rescue the 15 children set to be crushed by that process and she wanted to prepare a place for them in the wide world out there. She only wanted to add some human kindness into the purely coldhearted system.
But she had not expected it to keep running even after it failed. The patrons and sponsors that had interfered without her knowledge were especially painful. They wanted to alter the project as they saw fit and saving the human race was a laughable idea to them. A method of controlling the White Queen would look much more desirable.
So much so that they would readily place 15 lives on the scales.
The Mock Battlefield was no longer in use, but once those sponsors found a new way to play in the mud, they would send those 15 right back to hell.
And it would escalate endlessly until the miracle before their eyes faded away.
“Akura-san.”
She called out to a skinny man in a jumpsuit who was carrying a cardboard box full of documents down an Outer Circle passageway. He hated the digital to the point of a phobia, and these documents were one problem that caused for him.
Blasphemous Inspiration stared at her while holding the box.
“Perfect timing. I have something to discuss with you.”
“Is it anything I might actually help you with? Unfortunately, I have no intention of carelessly messing with the White Queen.”
“Even in the face of that miracle? That is the completion of my theory! That Queen has been contained in this world. We must be but a single step away from controlling her!!”
“…”

Madam Professor toyed with the whistle hanging at her chest and calmly thought about her doubts that anything in his documents contained a path leading to the Queen herself.
(Then who filled in the holes in his theory?)
She had no proof, but she knew.
If it had not been him, the White Queen would have no reason for her acceptance of and fixation on him.
“Besides, communication with the White Queen is impossible. He is the only exception. You know why she only repeats the word ‘brother’ when speaking with anyone else, don’t you? She is calling for him. She is warning us to go through him if we want to speak with her. She is the absolute peak of the Unexplored-class that lies behind even what we call gods. We should count ourselves lucky we can even look upon her without receiving punishment from heaven.” Shigara Masami bitterly laid out her rejection.
“Even if we do try to approach the White Queen, she will just ignore us entirely. And if we forcibly keep up a method she doesn’t like, you can guess how she’ll thank us, can’t you?”
“Of course.”
“The White Queen will always be the White Queen. She may look stable at the moment, but that does not mean her power has faded in the slightest. She is the strongest Unexplored-class and the peak of the peak who is reached by using even the gods of legend as stepping stones. It’s obvious what will happen if you carelessly anger her.”
She gave an obvious warning, but the man named Akura Taisaku was unfazed.
What had he been doing all this time after throwing out the Hatter? A bad feeling built up in Shigara Masami’s chest.
So she took the initiative.
“Don’t tell me you intend to interfere with him as the key? Are you going to negotiate with and persuade him? And if that doesn’t work, threaten and intimidate him? That will do nothing but anger the White Queen. The very top priority in an experiment should be the insurance of safety, not the pursuit of a result. What good is completing a killer virus if you’re the first one it infects? A developer like you must understand that.”
“Yes, I do.” The jumpsuit man remained smiling. “I gave it a lot of thought. Would I implant a bomb in Shiroyama Kyosuke’s brain or heart? Would I avoid the Queen’s direct wrath by messing with Biondetta or Kyoumi who are close to Shiroyama Kyousuke? But it was no use. The very process of ‘challenging’ that peak was mistaken. That sort of decision would be easily crushed in the face of her absurd power and unreasonable correctness. Yes, just like all the preparations of all the villains of myth and history are only used to show off the gods’ power when they are destroyed.”
“Then…?”
Blasphemous Inspiration was even more frightening for not stopping despite understanding that.

Just what taboo was he reaching for while thinking he was applying the lesson of Columbus's egg?
"We only need to look at it in reverse."
Electricity seemed to surge down Shigara Masami's back.
It was not that a lack of understanding filled her with fear. She hated her ugly mind for understanding.
"The White Queen is not reacting oddly around us. The odd behavior is her ability to speak normally with Shiroyama Kyousuke. She was always insane. What we must do is search out the conditions that turn that insane being into something normal. Am I wrong?"
"Even if you do, only one person can fill that role. And there is no exchanging the roles now."
"Don't be so sure. There is more than one rabbit in Lewis Carroll's story."
"You can't mean…"
"And the Guide Rabbit appears in a few parts of the story, but isn't there one where he treats the eternal girl like his servant? This is not some classic masterpiece that makes your head hurt like Shakespeare or Dostoyevsky. It is a written simply so that even children can understand, so I won't let you say you don't get it."
"You can't mean it!!"
If there had been a knife here, she might have stabbed him without a second thought.
But that would have been meaningless. It was probably already in progress below the surface. Killing Akura Taisaku alone would not stop this wicked situation.
"The 15 were given their roles, but not all 78 cards were used. It was fortunate this one was leftover," said the gear of insanity. "Operation March Hare. That incomprehensible and simply mad individual held a tea party with the Hatter. What better role is there for a task as mad as fully controlling the Queen?"
The situation was falling apart and going insane.
For better or for worse, creating something new may have required a genius mind.
But setting history in motion only required a fool as long as they had a throne and a crown.
And of course no concern was given to the quality of the outcome.

A Happy Memory from an Unknown Point on the Timeline 2

“There’s a cake.”
Explorer #1, Biondetta, spoke up after sneaking into the kitchen by the cafeteria, opening the giant industrial refrigerator, and sticking her head inside.
“I found a cake!!”
Kyousuke looked bored after being dragged along as Explorer #2, but Biondetta was just about jumping for joy. Kyoumi sighed in the same kitchen, having just placed plastic wrap over the food she had made for those who ate late at night.
There was a homemade-looking shortcake in the refrigerator. Instead of the single slice one could buy at a convenience store, it was a whole round cake. If it was cut up, there would be enough for 10.
“Oh, you noticed it?”
“Did you make it, Kyoumi?” asked Kyousuke.
Kyoumi nodded happily, but that seemed to be about him not adding the “-san” to her name.
“No, but it seems like someone sometimes makes one and puts it in the fridge.”
The Miniature Garden only had a general supply of food.
The adults always kept the kitchen stocked with the necessary ingredients, but they did not go beyond that. If one of the 15 felt like cooking as a change of pace, they would make enough for everyone. If more than one person felt like cooking, they would split the job. If no one wanted to, they would eat nutrient blocks and cereal. That was all.
Biondetta liked to cook, but she could only cook fried eggs and toast. Kyousuke would only eat gelatin vitamin and supplements if left to his own devices, so he never entered the kitchen in the first place. Kyoumi had an almighty repertoire that covered Japanese, Western, and Chinese cooking, so the others were gradually realizing that her days were the best.
Kyousuke and Biondetta exchanged a glance.
“I wonder who made it.”
“More importantly, are we allowed to eat it?”
“C’mon, shut the fridge already,” warned Kyoumi while casually pulling out the whole cake sitting on a large plate. “I noticed it pretty early since I was cooking. I was like, ‘oh, there’s a cake’. But it came with this note.”
“?”
Biondetta tilted her head and Kyoumi waved her hand.
At some point, a small note had appeared between her index and middle fingers.
“It says ‘first come, first serve’.”
It may have been someone’s way of thanking the siblings who cooked without any real obligation to do so.
And Kyoumi had felt bad keeping such a large cake to herself.
She set the large plate down on the counter by the sink and they all viewed the cake together. It was a large shortcake. Bright strawberries were

accurately lined up like the face of a clock and it had a homemade-looking white chocolate plate and sugar sculpture doll. The plate used strawberry chocolate to spell out the words “Eat Me”. It was another reference to Lewis Carroll.
Biondetta’s eyes sparkled as she stared at the cake.
“That doll kind of looks like you, Kyoumi.”
“It might be the White Queen instead of me.”
Kyousuke’s first impression was that it looked more like Kyoumi.
The face of the cutely-proportioned doll was well made. Someone had to have carefully observed the girl. Even with the deformed proportions, it would not have been easy to make.
Kyousuke briefly thought of it like the model for an art competition.
And after some consideration…
“Maybe Biondetta would have been too flat to be interesting.”
“You were thinking something rude just now, weren’t you? I’m sure of it!”
Biondetta shouted tearfully back at him, but the situation was still underway.
Kyoumi picked up an all-purpose knife but then swapped it for a fruit knife.
“Okay, I’ll cut it. …But it’s too big for just the three of us. Kyousuke, Biondetta. Go see if any of the other siblings are around. You don’t have to find all of them if they aren’t obvious.”
“You say that, but I won’t forgive you if you start eating it on your own!!”
“Biondetta. There’s no way she could eat all that herself.”
“You don’t understand because you’re a little brother, but the chocolate plate and sugar sculpture have what’s called rarity!”
Kyousuke and Biondetta left on their errand even as they argued.
They glanced around the cafeteria, but they did not spot any of the 15.
Instead…
“Oh, you brought one of the vessels?”
Kyoumi looked surprised when she saw her two younger siblings return.
It was one of the 3 vessels prepared for the Miniature Garden. The girl was about Kyoumi’s age, she had brown skin, and she wore her blonde hair in a ponytail. The others were the thin pajama girl in the iron maiden and the silver bob cut girl with the crown of thorns, but this one sat in a wheelchair-like device. However, the chair portion was covered in metal plugs. The mental stability device was modelled after the thorny torture chair used during the middle ages.
They were very heavily equipped for vessels.
Most of the siblings had initially only viewed them from a distance due to their strange appearances, but after hesitantly approaching, they found them to be normal people. They only wore the hideous restraints due to the burden of constantly binding and canceling contracts with the 15, so it would have been misguided to fear them for it.
But that girl was not all.
A woman was pushing the wheelchair from behind.

“Shigara Masami was there.”
“It looks like Shigara is drunk.”
“Oh, how rare. You don’t usually set foot in the self-cooking space, Masami. Did you run out of snacks in your room?”
“Address adults with more respect, newcomer,” slurred Madam Professor Shigara Masami, the developer in a tight skirt suit and lab coat who had a long black ponytail. However, her shoulders were slanted, her suit was slipping off in places, and her cheeks were somewhat flushed.
She patted the head of the vessel in the wheelchair before staggering over to a locked cabinet installed separately from the industrial refrigerator.
If they wanted to, the 15 could have pried it open, but none of them were interested.
The shelves were lined with bottles.
“Uuh… I’m out of drinks in my room. Vodka, vodka…”
“Wow, are you chugging the most deadly stuff you can find?”
“Does Shigara run on an ecological engine that uses bioethanol?”
Kyoumi and Biondetta sounded exasperated, but Shigara did not seem to mind.
“I’m not drunk. I’ve only had 12 glasses of straight vodka.”
“Why are you bragging about that!? Who do you think you’re competing against!?”
Kyoumi quickly spoke up. Was that woman really expecting 10-year-olds like Kyousuke and Biondetta to care if she was the strongest at something like that? Each question only led to another.
“And it’s wrong to treat vodka like a symbol of alcoholism. It has a fairly pure flavor that doesn’t linger and it’s one of mankind’s 3 greatest inventions. Just look at the convenience store shelves. All of the fruit liqueurs tend to use either shochu or vodka! Oh, my beloved Absolium.”
At their ages, Kyousuke and Biondetta should have been wearing *randoseru*, so it was futile to expect them to agree. And since Shigara Masami started pouring it straight into a glass, she most certainly did not enjoy it in the normal fashion, but arguing with her was pointless. She would be the one suffering from a hangover the following morning and shouting “et tu, Absolium” with Caesar-esque rage.
And according to her…
“Hic. This is generally what happens to a grownup that trying to forget about their job.”
“Should you really be saying that when your job is to construct a perfect family here? Oh, but that’s not what matters here. The cake. Now we can divide it into 5 pieces, but can you eat sweet things, Masami?”
“You could say alcohol and sugar are both my lovers! Sergeant!!”
“Don’t talk about lovers in front of the children.”
Shigara Masami stood at a slanted angle and saluted for some reason, so Shiroyama Kyoumi raised her middle finger (even though that could not be

a good lesson for the younger children either). But then Kyoumi grabbed the fruit knife again and got to work slicing the round cake.
Biondetta whispered to Kyousuke.
“(From the looks of things, Shigara didn’t make the cake.)”
“(As long as it tastes good and doesn’t harm anyone, it doesn’t matter who made it.)”
“Hey, quit your flirting over there, you little brats! Not so close together!”
Shigara Masami pushed down on them like a landslide, so Kyousuke and Biondetta ended their conversation. In fact, she had her right arm around Kyousuke’s shoulders and her left around Biondetta’s, so they had more important things to worry about.
Meanwhile, the wheelchair vessel and Kyoumi continued measuring the cake by eye and discussing how to divide it. Unlike cutting it in a cross for 4 pieces, 5 pieces required a bit of guesswork.
As a safety measure, Kyoumi told herself she would give Kyousuke and Biondetta any pieces that happened to be bigger.
“It’s still a lot for 5, but I guess it’s not too much to eat. And Kyousuke and Biondetta will have an endless tolerance for sweets at their age.”
“I-I’m the big sister! Don’t treat me like Kyousuke!!”
Biondetta blushed and argued back while the drunk rubbed her cheek against her, but she was betrayed by her eyes which were locked onto the cake.
Kyoumi did not hide her smile as she used the fruit knife to cleanly divide the round cake. Each time she transferred a piece onto a small plate, Biondetta’s eyes moved back and forth like she was watching a tennis match.
But…
“Now for the real problem,” said Kyoumi.
Biondetta was the only one to vigorously nod in agreement.

Eat Me

Kyousuke and the torture chair vessel only tilted their heads. Drunk Shigara Masami must have just wanted to get something in her empty stomach because she used a shaky finger to scoop up the cream from the fruit knife. They chose to only gently chide her.
Kyoumi took the knife from the wheelchair vessel and placed in a water-filled tray in the sink.
“I cut the cake into 5 pieces, but 2 of them are special. …The chocolate plate and the sugar sculpture. Now, who wants them!?”
“The sugar sculpture is mine!!” declared Biondetta.
“It’s clearly modelled after me, so shouldn’t you let me have it!?”
“You’re the one that said it might be the White Queen!”
“Besides, you’re always eating some kind of chocolate or waffles!”
“Don’t you understand I have Cute Girl’s Disease!? It means I die of loneliness if I don’t eat sweet things!!”
“Quit acting like you’re so frail! Let’s take this outside!!”
As the two argued, the vessel proved herself to be almost painfully mature by taking a plate holding a normal shortcake with nothing on it.
And the (supposed) adult in the room, Shigara Masami, started curling up on the floor. If they did not settle this soon, she would fall asleep right there and destroy the children’s image of grownups, making it a nightmarish form of terrorism.
Kyousuke felt he had no choice but to intervene.
“Okay, how about this?”
“You don’t get to take it for yourself and call it a compromise! We don’t need that kind of joke right now!!”
“That’s not where I was going with this.” Kyousuke grabbed the sugar sculpture doll. “If you both want it, then you just have to spit it in two.”
“Vahhhhh!! You tore off my head!!”
A tearful scream immediately followed.

Facts

- With the White Queen living among them, the Mock Battlefield and ranking board have lost their purpose.
- Kyousuke began thinking he could save everyone if he could use the White Queen properly. That foolish idea began to crumble away as the 15 began falling apart.

- The White Queen did nothing wrong. But her mere presence definitely twisted her surroundings. The Relective Graph measuring the 15’s bonds grew twisted around the Queen.
- The White Queen does not communicate with anyone besides Kyousuke. She rejects anyone else while using only the word “brother”.
- Claude Magentarain who once saved young Azalea is taking part in the plan to kill the Queen as a member of Freedom. In addition to the truly powerful in the monitoring room, it can be assumed that several summoners and vessels are blending into the surface of the wandering land and the surrounding sea.
- To protect the family he was given, Kyousuke refused to “correct” himself. But that strength deeply hurt Biondetta who was trying to be his big sister.
- As the Miniature Garden is distorted by various pressures, it is advancing to a new stage. The adults are shifting toward an operation named after the March Hare.
- The White Queen was not driven insane by anything. She was evil from the very beginning. But that evil hides itself only while she is with Kyousuke.

Stage 03: The Door to Hell, Who Will Unlock It?

“It’ll be okay.”
“It’ll be okay.”
(Stage 03 Open 11/12 17:00 “Outbreak of the War (Critical Point)”)
The Door to Hell, Who Will Unlock It?

Part 1

Another month passed.
The season had changed from fall to winter.
But that may not have mattered much at the tropical wandering land or in the perfectly air conditioned underground world.
At some point, that vast space’s name had changed.
Now everyone called it the Queen’s Miniature Garden.
“…”
It was an official change at this point. No one paid any attention to the initial Fifteen Siblings Project. Not Kyousuke and the other children and not the adults who managed the official facilities. Everyone had been blinded by the unbelievable discovery of the White Queen.
Even if they failed to slowly complete those 15, they could achieve their goal with the Queen.
Or perhaps saving the human race no longer mattered to them.
The adults had stopped even looking at the Relective Graph.
This was not just distracted driving; they were not even holding the steering wheel.
And it went without saying what had happened to the lines representing the depths of their bonds.
There were even strange rumors about the Cheshire Cat spending every night making strange surprise attacks or the Queen of Hearts reaching out to the injured workers to create worshipers.

“Is something the matter, brother?”
In the cafeteria, the Queen herself asked a puzzled question while holding a spoon in her fist and doing battle with a large bowl of cereal and milk. It was hard to tell if she really did not know how to use a knife and fork or if she simply wanted Kyousuke to look after her.
Kyousuke realized his own tastes had changed while eating with her.
Or rather, he was a precision guided missile that constantly made “corrections” as he approached his target. He had never been someone fixated on the act of ingesting nutrients.
“It’s nothing.”
He hid everything and smiled vaguely.
(…It’ll be okay.)
He did not know what he was hoping for, but he still held those words in his heart.
He felt like a prisoner waiting for his execution. Nothing happening did not bring him peace. The heads of the three major powers were observing everything and they could decide to take this lifestyle from him at any time. And he knew that time was coming eventually.
Once the go sign was given for killing the Queen, the Miniature Garden and the wandering land on the surface would instantly become the world’s harshest battlefield. One side was the leaders of the three major powers and elite summoners and vessels gathered from around the world. On the other side was the strongest of the strongest who towered over everyone at the top of the Unexplored-class. After a direct clash between those sides, it would be difficult to keep things as they were. All of this was an egg that would hatch into great justice. But once it broke, it was obvious what would happen to the puny lives clinging to the shell.
How could he say it would be okay when he was one of those pushing it in that direction?
He had done nothing to protect the 15 or the White Queen.
He still could not see where he really stood here, but he clenched his teeth and made a wish.
He truly wished with all his might.
(It’ll be okay. No matter what happens below the surface, nothing can happen as long as I have exclusive access to the Queen. No matter how tense the atmosphere grows, it won’t lead to tragedy as long as it doesn’t explode.)
It was almost impressively comical.
It was like he was desperately working to deny the doomsday written of in a book of prophecy.
No matter how much he tried to twist the meaning into what he wanted, he could not change the words as they were written.
“****.”
“Yes?”

“Promise me. I know you might be sick of this after so many times, but please.”
“Yes, of course. I will say it as many times as you want, brother.”
The White Queen giggled and raised her right hand for the vow.
“I will not hurt anyone. If that is the condition I most follow to stay with you, then I will throw out my position as the strongest or as the peak by fully disarming myself.”
But he knew deep down that this would not last forever.
By avoiding an explosion, the internal pressure would only continue to grow.
And it would eventually reach the point that it would produce an unthinkable disaster.

Part 2

Kyousuke was worried.
He was worried beyond belief and had trouble breathing.
“It’ll be okay.”
Kyousuke could not bring himself to mention the details and only bit his lip, but Shigara Masami told him that in her examination room. When she wore the entirely unnecessary stethoscope, it was a sign that she was willing to let him consult with her.
But her words were meant differently from Kyousuke’s good luck charm.
The Government developer known as Madam Professor had more to say.
“It’s true something hideous is underway in this Miniature Garden. And it is sure to eventually be discovered and develop into a great disaster.”
She did not forcibly reject anything.
She was saying it would be okay despite it.
“I didn’t have the power to stop it on my own. In fact, if I had tried to stop it by force, it would have destroyed the barely-maintained balance and brought disaster to the forefront right away. So I may have no right to act like I know what I’m talking about here.”
“What does that mean…?”
Did she have some connection to the plan to kill the Queen?
Was she really only a developer in the Miniature Garden?
“But it’ll be okay. Humans might have a weak side, but they also have a strong side. Things might be tending toward the evil side and we might be drowning ourselves in a vast ocean, but we will notice at the last second.

We will notice and stop ourselves. Because humans have both the power to continue on and the power to stop.”
She did not get into the details, but she was not running away from it either.
It felt like she understood things on an even deeper level than Kyousuke and yet decided it was best not to discuss it. But this did not come from a shallow pride in the advantage she held by knowing what he did not. Her words contained the human warmth that he had nearly forgotten and that he had thought had withered away within the Miniature Garden.
He had to ask.
“…Was it you?”
“?”
“Were the tarot cards your decision? Did you see **** as someone who dove into this ‘other world’ from her original world and did you think we could control her in that framework if we all approached her properly? No, *did you think we would be able to end this without killing her*…?”
Shigara Masami smiled gently.
But she did not nod or shake her head.
“Don’t forget, Kyousuke-kun. I might look like a saint to you. You might find yourself relying on me because of my obvious kindness. But this isn’t anything special. It isn’t something that can only exist inside a chosen person. This is an emotion that everyone should have.”
“…”
“For example, do you know the head of security, Elvesta Toydream?”
He could not answer.
The guards all wore gas masks and hid their bodylines with explosion-resistant jackets, so their sexes and ages were unclear. And due to their heavy equipment, their gaits and mannerisms seemed inhuman and hard to read. It would be difficult to distinguish one from another.
Shigara Masami laughed before continuing.
“He is the heir to the Toy Dream Company, a giant entertainment corporation, but the more he studies fairy tales, the more they frighten him. He is a summoner who will eventually oppose that kingdom of dreams and fantasy. …But he enjoys making sweets and he is never satisfied with a cake until he decorates it with a chocolate plate or a sugar sculpture doll.”
“Ah,” said Kyousuke in his T-shirt and shorts.
They had sometimes found mystery desserts in the kitchen refrigerator. He remembered Biondetta and Kyoumi fighting over them back when things had been more normal. No matter how evenly it was divided, the battle over the sugar sculpture doll would never end. Even though the white chocolate plate saying “Eat Me” actually tasted better.
“Do you see now? There are things you don’t know because you can’t see them, but that doesn’t mean those people have no kindness. I believe anyone can convert their kindness into strength. Even if they seem to be making everything worse like Akura Taisaku. So it’ll be okay, Kyousuke-kun.

You can't assume that *this is your only safe space*. That rejection will cloud your vision and actively make things worse."
She had never said who had decided on the tarot cards and added in a trick to try to save the White Queen.
But even if he did not know their name or what they looked like, they did exist. Someone had hoped for that and acted on it. Someone like that existed inside the greedy group of both adults and children who were influenced by the Queen's power.
Shiroyama Kyousuke was not alone.
The environment could hardly be worse, the 15 and the White Queen were about to burst, and Kyousuke himself was part of the group that had set things in that direction, but there was someone praying for a future that matched his own hopes. A future where no one was hurt and everyone was smiling.
"…"
Kyousuke decided to figure this out a bit at a time.
He did not know what was driving this nearly hopeless situation.
He wanted to oppose the 15 who were tumbling down and he wanted to oppose the truly powerful who were working to kill the White Queen. It did not matter how ridiculous, hopeless, or unrealistic it was. He still wanted to try for a path where no one had to fall and where everyone, including the Queen, could be together.
He wanted everyone to understand each other.
He wanted to lend them his strength.
He would not be fighting the adults of the Miniature Garden. He would refuse to fight a war against the truly powerful. He just wanted to speak with everyone some more.
Did they really have to acquire the White Queen?
Did they really have to kill the White Queen?
Was there really no other way?
After throwing out all their preconceptions, couldn't they search again for a resolution that satisfied everyone?
"…I want a boat."
Kyousuke's words sounded like a joke.
Shigara Masami tilted her head and he continued.
"Even if the world ends today and every last continent sinks into the ocean, I want to be able to pull everyone back up. So I want a boat."
"Ah ha ha! If you really want one, you can order any boat you want over the internet. Kyousuke-kun, how long has it been since you arrived here? You might not be aware of it, but your electronic bank account must have quite a fortune inside. …Since we've been doing so many awful things to you."
"…"
"So what will you do? If you really haven't touched your account at all… Wow! With a fishing boat, you could head out for some deep-sea fishing!!

But that might not be the best idea. Oh, what about a cruiser? They're pretty fashionable."
She made a variety of suggestions while checking various websites.
She seemed to be enjoying the search more than she cared about the boat itself.
Speaking with her made him feel like he was walking into a hypothetical future. His imagination spread its wings and he felt like he slipped into a parallel world.
"Oh, what a pretty white boat. So what are you going to call it?"
After filling in all the data needed to register it, Shigara Masami asked him that.
Kyousuke thought for a bit in his T-shirt and shorts.
And he made a choice that proved he was prepared to throw out all of his preconceptions.
"The White Queen. That would be perfect."
He would not be her enemy any longer.
Shiroyama Kyousuke would live alongside that name.
(After all, she's the one that stopped it.)
He quietly thought to himself.
He thought about the days when they had pretended to fight to the death in the round Mock Battlefield. The Jabberwock, Humpty Dumpy, and the Hatter had sent their Materials after each other, torn away each other's dignity, and looked down on each other. Those days had gone away when the White Queen had arrived.
(I mean, she hasn't done anything wrong!)
The Queen of Hearts and the Hatter were definitely feeling cornered.
But that was an issue with how they interacted with her. If they did not think of the White Queen as someone to outdo in some way or another, then their pride would not be hurt. Kyousuke could tell because he could approach her like normal. It was not about telling them to break their fangs or pull out their claws. If they stopped thinking that strength was everything, the Queen would not wear at their hearts. That was all there was to it.
(I mean, all of the damage around the world until now only happened because people failed to summon her in her perfect form!!)
The plan to kill the Queen was meant to stop the disasters occurring around the world, but those were the result of the supposedly intelligent people who tried to summon her with insufficient knowledge or techniques. So didn't the fault lie with those people for not adding in safety measures, rather than with the Queen? They could not even control her fingertip or one of her hairs, but they arrogantly thought they could control her in her entirety. If not for that, they might have been able to smoothly stand in the same field as Kyousuke.
In that case, what was there?
What reason was there for the White Queen to be killed!?

“Kyousuke-kun.”
Kyousuke’s shoulders jumped when his name was called.
Madam Professor’s eyes seemed to see right through him.
But she only spoke with a thin smile.
“I don’t know what’s on your mind, but I like that look on your face. If you were 10 years older, I might have fallen for you.”
“…”
“I can’t see directly into people’s hearts, but that isn’t a look people get with something bad in their heart. If you need something, just tell me. I’ll do everything I can to support you.”
He wanted to tell her everything.
But he was a liar, he had deceived everyone, and he had failed to tell anyone that the entire Miniature Garden was a grand farce.
So he silently steeled his resolve.
And he thought to himself again.
What did it matter if he was trapped between a rock and a hard place?
He would not let anyone hurt the White Queen.
He would save everyone: the people in the Miniature Garden, the truly powerful who were watching from outside, the summoners and vessels gathered from around the world, and even the Queen who was closest and yet farthest away.
He would end this chain of fruitless conflict.
He swore it.
(There has to be at least one person.)
He knew it was foolish.
But if he did not create a foothold here, the world would never open up for him.
(There has to be one giant idiot who’s arrogant enough to wish to be a king of not killing!!)
He recalled the very first tarot card.
Yes, the Fool led to the truth of the world.
(This isn’t about her strongest power or her charisma. There has to be at least one person who just wants to be with the Queen and just wants to make her one of his friends!!)

Part 3

In the darkness hidden a thin layer away, someone muttered two simple words.

They had happened to hear a wish that could never be.
They knew the boy could not shake this desire even though he knew it was ridiculous and that this hesitation would reduce his lifespan on the battlefield.
So they spoke with both irritation and sorrow in their voice.
Those words contained the pain of readily accepting something oneself while having it rejected by someone else.
“…You fool.”

Part 4

Not even Kyousuke knew what was to blame.
With renewed resolve, he left Shigara Masami’s lab and started back toward his living space in the Inner Circle, but he ran across doom along the way.
“———”
It began as a quiet voice.
It was only a small vibration through a door that a normal person might not have even noticed.
“Passing between worlds is truly inconvenient.”
The voice brought as much of a shock as a surprise blow to the heart.
(The White Queen? Why!?)
He looked to the door again. This was the Outer Circle where the adults lived and that was a room he had snuck into once before. It was the lab belonging to Akura Taisaku, the developer who had tried to create the strongest summoner by tuning the Hatter.
But the Queen supposedly could not communicate with anyone but Kyousuke.
He was utterly baffled as the voice reached his ears through the door again.
“As I stand at the very peak, calling for me is not easy. That would place a great burden on you, brother.”
“I simply wish to remain by your side like this, brother.”
What was this?
Both the voice itself and what it was saying made no sense.
With the completion of the Sewn Realm Summoning, the White Queen did not need to worry about the difficulty or time limit of summoning her.
Everyone was aware of those conditions, but they were stripped away for a conversation even more meaningless than a lone spinning gear.
Yes, it was a conversation.

Another voice answered the queen's disconcerting one.
Surprisingly, it was identical to Shiroyama Kyousuke's own voice.
"I don't think you should just have to obey the summoner's orders just because you're a Material."
"I want to hear so much more of what you have to say. I want to hear your thoughts in their purest form."
"After all, we're comrades who place our lives in each other's hands."
Why? What was going on?
Inside Kyousuke's confusion was a horrible – truly horrible – icy core that would not melt even in the warmest light. And those thoughts of absolute zero mocked that surface confusion.
———*Kyousuke, you really do understand, don't you?*
———*Your biggest weakness is that you're not stupid enough to claim you don't understand.*
"Kah…hah…!?"
He had trouble breathing.
He could not reach this answer. It was too sinful to even put together as a mental theory. And he certainly could not even think about the possibility that it had been acted on.
He would truly – truly, truly – start to hate them.
He was prepared to reach an understanding with everyone, work hand in hand, and escape this dead-end situation.
But that resolve was shattering!!
"Wow! Wow!"
"It's no longer restricted to ten minutes or to a battle. You can really summon me whenever and however you like."
"Ah ha ha. Now I can go play with you whenever I want! I can give you anything I want!!"
He wanted to deny it, but he could not.
So he could not hold back any longer.
He did not bother unlocking the door and cracking it open to peek inside.
He kicked the door down. The thick door had a double digit number of locks installed along the side, but every last one of them broke and the door really did collapse into the room.
The Queen was inside.
And of course, there was not a second Shiroyama Kyousuke inside.
A gloomy man in a jumpsuit sat in front of the Queen.
Akura Taisaku glanced Kyousuke's way and spoke in a voice nothing like his own. It was the soprano of a boy whose voice had yet to change.
"Queen, this is dangerous. Get behind me."

Part 5

Secret rooms had been created all over the Miniature Garden.
The adults and even the 15 siblings had stopped communicating.
Then what were they so obsessed with that they would stay closed in their rooms?

“Queen, come here. Today I’ll teach you how to play billiards.”
“Oh. You’ll really do that for me, brother!?”

This was the answer.
Akura Taisaku did not have the White Queen to himself.
That would not explain this.
After all, the White Queen had been with Shiroyama Kyousuke the entire time.

“Queen, you have something in your hair. Let me get it for you.”
“Thank you so much, brother!”

So his initial assumption had been wrong.
He had been wrong to assume that the concept of an alibi applied to the White Queen.
She was simply too great a being, so even if she was a single being, nothing said that more than one temporary version could not appear on the stage.
There was a precedent:
Unexplored-class. Sound Range: None. Cost: 21.
The “Black” Maw that Swallows All (nu – lp – eu – bf – zuh – ei – jkv – iu – a – xw).
That Unexplored-class used the exact same letters in a different order. That frightening Material appeared as a penalty in the Summoning Ceremony and mercilessly devoured all rule breakers. It was the same being as the White Queen while also behaving as a distinct life form.

“What should we eat today, Queen?”
“Eh heh heh. Anything’s fine as long as I’m eating it with you, brother!”

So if the conditions were right, the White Queen could be divided. She could be split apart.
And they would each begin to function as a unique White Queen.

Didn’t Lewis Carroll’s story have Alice temporarily take on a new role when the Guide Rabbit mistook her for his maidservant and gave her a new name?

“Queen, will you promise me you’ll never leave me alone?”
“Of course! Even if it means making an enemy of the entire world, I will always walk by your side, brother!!”

And Lewis Carroll’s world did not have just the one rabbit.
The Guide Rabbit was the most famous, but there was more than the one rabbit named in the story.
In other words…
So…

“Then we’ll always be together, Queen.”
“Yes, yes! Let’s walk together forever! No matter where it takes us!!”

They were whispering.
In each of their rooms, they were whispering to their own White Queen.
The Hatter, the Jabberwock, the Queen of Hearts, Humpty Dumpy, the Duchess, the Dodo, the Cheshire Cat, etc.
All of them were.
Multiple rabbit voices spoke…all identical to Kyousuke’s voice.

“I’m so happy, Queen.”
“Yes, yes! You have no idea how happy it makes me to hear that…!!”

If they could not take her for themselves, they would use her as she was.
It did not matter if she was only loyal to Shiroyama Kyousuke. They would trample on her good will and deceive her.
They would fool the White Queen’s gentle feelings and control her through her good will.
That was the greatest evil.
That was the truth of Operation March Hare.

Part 6

“Uuh…”
His vision…no, his mind went dark.
An intense urge to vomit filled his rattled brain.
Kyousuke could barely stand on his own two feet as he faced that hopeless malice.
He stepped into Akura Taisaku’s lab.
He had known what he would find inside. He really had.
But the shock was so great that he found himself screaming.
“Owwwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh

No, what did this look like to her?
Akura Taisaku had control over her, so if he ordered it, she would likely bare her fangs against Kyousuke while entirely oblivious to what she was doing. She was the peak of the Unexplored-class and the strongest of the strongest. Without a protective circle, he would be turned to dust by even one of her hairs.
He could not win.
He simply could not win and he would die here.
———No, you know the truth, don't you?
———Otherwise, why would you have bothered kicking down that locked door?
"Ah…"
He heard the whispers of the icy core deep in his head.
What was about to happen slowly dawned on him.
———You couldn't forgive him. You must have wished to tear it all down and drive it all to failure.
———So that is exactly what will happen. Everything will follow your desires…your calculations.
"Ahhh!?"
It happened only a moment later.
It was like a thin, thin circuit had fried.
While accurately locked onto him, the White Queen's eyes returned to normal. She tilted her head in the adult's lab, looked to her hands, and then looked around the room.
The man's smile was stiff, but he had yet to abandon hope. He spoke in an unnatural soprano voice.
"Strange. This shouldn't be. Hey, Queen, you can hear me, can't you!? Look at me and tell me who I am!!"
And the White Queen answered with those eyes.
Those horribly cold eyes were the same ones that had been locked onto Kyousuke in his T-shirt and shorts.
"Who are you?"

Part 7

"Babvegdobchahhh!!!!!"
The world was dyed in red and black.

Part 8

“Ah…”
Something broke inside Kyousuke.
That could no longer be called a person. Even calling it someone’s remains seemed suspect. It was only a dark red paste staining the walls, the floor, and the ceiling.
“Kh…ah.”
The Queen had done that.
She had crossed a line.
There was no going back now. It had only been a feeble hope, but he had been planning a different path that threw out the impossible task of killing the Queen and talked it out with everyone instead. But that possibility was snuffed out before his eyes.
“Gwooaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh

He could not trust himself.
Shigara Masami had said everyone had the strength that came from kindness. But didn't that lead to another conclusion as well? Everyone also had something other than that. Humans had always had as much wickedness as they did kindness.
What was the identity of the kindness that had budded inside him?
The precision guided missile.
To approach the target inputted into his brain, he had repeatedly made minor course corrections. It had all been exactly as the truly powerful wanted. And all towards their goal of killing the Queen.
Is that why this had happened?
As time had passed without any results, had his core chosen the "optimal answer"?
Had he simply been disguising it as justice when he whispered of saving everyone?
Had he never changed from beginning to end?
Had it only been a temporary show of good meant to take him along the shortest route?
"Owwwwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!"
———Yell and yell. Then everyone will notice something is wrong and gather here.
———I wonder what will happen when the multiple Queens meet.
Kyousuke frantically shut his mouth, but it was too late.
He heard pounding footsteps. Identical footsteps were approaching from multiple directions.
It's over, he thought.
He could not stop it. Once they met, it was obvious just how the White Queens would pay the others back for deceiving and manipulating them.
Could he really say it?
And even if he shouted for them to stay away, would any of them really stop?
"…"
Unable to do anything, Kyousuke simply waited for the final moment to arrive.
But he once again made a mistake. Or had he been too clever for his own good?
When the multiple White Queens met, he was mysteriously able to tell one apart from the others.
It was the one that had been with him all this time.
And without even thinking – truly without thinking – he shouted to her.
"Stop, *Mary*!! Stay away!!!!!"
Mary Ann was the new name that Alice was given when the Guide Rabbit mistook her for his maidservant. And as long as she used that name, everyone around her treated her like she really was that maidservant.

That name gave the eternal girl another role.
And it had been given to her by the rabbit.
“What about Alice (with) Rabbit? Now we’ll never be separated again!!”
When she had innocently made that suggestion, Kyousuke had actually expressed some slight disapproval.
“That would just be using the names the Miniature Garden gave us.”
So…
So…
So…
“I’ve been calling you something ever since you arrived, haven’t I? Mary. Mary Ann. That is both Alice and not Alice. It is another role given to her by the rabbit. Now you can be free of all bonds.”
That was back when Kyousuke had still been trapped by the plan to kill the Queen and had been approaching her to deceive her. But that silly lie had supported him in the very, very end.
Or it should have.
But why did he overlook it?
The other Alices had not been given that name. They were the “others” who had not been made special. Why did he overlook just how much maddening damage those words would do to them?
It told them they were nothing but fakes and that only another could receive his love.
And that fact brought a chain reaction of pure white explosions into the world.
Even one White Queen wielded unbelievable power and now that fury boiled over and whipped up a storm of destruction.

Part 9

A white explosion struck his body.
Had he been unconscious for only a few seconds or for more than an hour?
“Kah…hah…”
His vision wavered. He could not even perceive the space around him. In his T-shirt and shorts, Kyousuke suppressed the feeling of something caught in his throat and desperately worked to breath.
How many people had died in that explosion?
What had happened to Biondetta, to Kyoumi, to Shigara Masami…to everyone?
And…

What had happened to the White Queen???
“…other.”
Only one person stood tall in that broken world.
They had all killed each other.
To take that one love for themselves, the Queens with identical specs had all killed each other.
And only one had survived as if to say that was what a queen was.
“…Brother…”
He could not tell *which* White Queen this was.
It was like a Kodoku jar. Who remained standing at the end of the fight to the death?
But Kyousuke knew one thing.
(That isn’t Mary Ann.)
He was sure of it.
It could not possibly be her.
(She swore to me that she wouldn’t hurt anyone. So she must have kept her violence sealed away to the very end.)
If not for that verbal promise, she could have wielded her claws and fangs and she might have managed to survive.
It was sad. It was painful. He wanted to run away in anger.
But he could not.
Suppressing the White Queen came first. She carried no sin of her own. She had simply been trapped by a curse. And it was Kyousuke himself who had cut her chains and forced the horrifying backlash onto her.
He could no longer hope for the best result.
But he could not give up. He had to stop her at the second best position.
He could not let her continue this sorrowful rampage.
———Are you still fighting it?
“Shut up…”
———This will begin the killing of the Queen. This proves the prediction that the Sewn Realm Summoning prevents the Queen from escaping to the other world even when she is killed. If the truly powerful sweep away the remaining fragments through pure numbers, even that White Queen will be truly killed this time.
“Shut up!!!!!!”
Something burned deep in his mind.
The supposedly unmeltable icy core was burned entirely away.
He felt a sticky liquid dripping from his ears.
This was probably the final correction. He could no longer use the cruel thought processes of a precision guided missile.
But that was fine.
He did not care if it had broken.
He would shake off the destiny decided for him and he would grab at his own future.

So he wanted the power to save someone instead. He wanted the strength to not give up even after making a decisive mistake! He wanted the ultimate light that let him embrace that twisted person and tell her it would be okay!!
Now that he had become a mere boy, he began dragging his body that was too weak to actually get up.
But not toward the White Queen.
There was no point in fighting. Challenging the peak of the Unexplored-class as a human would be reckless and choosing to harm her was the wrong way to deal with this.
He had to find the source of the power driving the Queen insane.
He had to destroy it and remove the bonds of false love and affection from her heart.
"…"
(The grownups had 78 tarot cards based on Lewis Carroll's story.)
He thought of the spider web structure of the Miniature Garden. That was likely modeled after the psychedelic picture book world existing down the rabbit hole. He calculated out what symbols they would have used where to most efficiently apply the March Hare's influence.
(They viewed the White Queen as the eternal girl and trapped her in this story world to control her through the actions of the children who were given different roles by the cards.)
And that guided him to where he needed to go and what he needed to remove to return everything to normal.
(And on top of that, they mixed the Guide Rabbit and the March Hare together to steal my role from me…)
"Brother, where are you going?"
"Anywhere's fine as long as it isn't heaven…"
He would even visit the depths of hell if he would find the method of saving her there.
He clenched his teeth and gradually but desperately made progress.
He grabbed it in the very, very end.
Everyone had drawn a card from that set in the very beginning. It was most likely an original tarot set based on Lewis Carroll's masterpiece. No one had chosen the March Hare card.
That was the second rabbit.
It was the source of the confusion.
"It'll be okay," announced Kyousuke despite barely breathing.
He spoke those words that had truly saved him when he heard them from Shigara Masami.
"I'll save you now, Queen. If I tear apart this March Hare card, the confusion and deception will vanish and you'll be back to normal. That way, you won't be manipulated by this *mistaken love* any longer…!!"

Part 10

At that time, the White Queen did not know who she was.
She was the last Queen standing after repeatedly killing her own. She had nothing to prove her previous memories were not based on deception, so she may have been empty with nothing to rely on.
But.
She still felt some attachment.
(…Back to normal…?)
She felt a slight prickling in her heart.
That faint pain became the trigger that would end the world.
(Mistaken love…???)
She bit her lip a little.
Something unidentifiable seeped into her blank thoughts.
(In that case…)
It was true this might not be pure.
There might be a single drop of poison in the vast, vast lake.
But did that ruin it?
Did that require rejecting everything else?
In other words…
If I return to normal…
What happens to my brother's promise to always stay by my side?

Part 11

There was a frightening flash of light.
The word doom referred to just such a moment.
As extraordinary as everything else had been, it had still only been the warmup.
"Ahhhh

of life. It was so obviously a corpse that it kept him from even considering trying to revive her.
She was light.
Far too light.
There was no dramatic revelation or great meaning. When the heart stopped, the blood grew stagnant, and the brain matter was destroyed, people would die. That simple fact of life robbed her of all human dignity.
Could this injustice be allowed?
Even if the Queen was the peak of the peak, could the world really allow this?
Kyousuke was unable to get up and struggled in a pool of blood, but the White Queen was moving next to him.
A card had fallen to the floor next to him.
She picked up the March Hare card that had made a mockery of her and she held it lovingly to her chest.
“Why, Queen…?”
He could not understand.
Shiroyama Kyousuke truly could not understand the White Queen’s feelings.
“Why are you rejecting my help and causing more damage!? Queen!?”
Meanwhile, the White Queen smiled faintly, truly faintly.
And she made an announcement to the person who would not call her Mary.
“You would not understand, brother.”
“What…?”
“It does not matter if some of it is mistaken or if you can’t tell it apart from the rest. You do not understand what it is like to have someone that makes you feel that way.”
“To hell with… To hell with thaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat!!”
That was the sign of their parting.
Kyousuke sought what was right too much to understand her love and the Queen had sought her love to the point of abandoning what was right.
A horrific war was beginning and it would throw everything into the abyss.

A Happy Memory from an Unknown Point on the Timeline 3

It had originally been meant as a thought experiment.
When looking at the Regulation-class, Divine-class, and Unexplored-class, the Summoning Ceremony could summon as many Materials as there were stars in the sky. What would summon what, how did one lead to another,

what route was used to reach what, what Material was the enemy summoning or preparing to summon, how could that be avoided or beaten, and what were their Costs and Sound Ranges? The possible paths were as complex as a spider web.
The location of the Petals and Spots, one's stock of White Thorns, the terrain, and the movement of the enemy summoner also had to be taken into consideration, but they set all that aside for the time being to focus on it as a thought experiment.
Could they memorize the Materials so efficiently it became second nature? What was the optimal medium for that?
"Okay. Starting from the Transforming Box (r u m – t e), I use a three hit combo to draw alphabet cards from the deck and complete the Leather Bag that Swallows and Digests (j k v – j k v – k m o l – m). That's Cost 11 and Middle Sound Range, so the greater Cost and superior Sound Range do major damage to the Cost 10 and Low Sound Range of your Pure Sphere with Hidden Fangs (t – e i – k o – f b – j i). And while Biondetta has to skip a turn, I continue powering it up to the Divine-class!!"
"Vahhh!?"
It was a handmade card game.
Biondetta screamed at the beating she took from the major damage Shiroyama Kyoumi announced and her voice echoed through the large party space.
The adults had taken a trial and error approach to finding a way to teach the 15 the patterns of the Materials through rote memorization and repetitive practice, but as Shigara Masami had watched, she had shouted "God, how boring. You're never going to get them motivated like that." and developed this card game all on her own.
The combos and having to skip a turn were not the same as the actual Blood-Sign method, but it was a convenient way to teach them how strong the different Materials were and which Materials made good stepping stones to reach which other ones.
While watching Kyoumi and Biondetta's duel from a short distance away, Kyousuke asked a question of the person next to him.
It was the developer named Shigara Masami.
"Aren't you going to play, Shigara?"
"Don't forget the '-san', newcomer. Besides, why should I play? This is a study tool for summoners."
She sounded exasperated as she drank a clear liquid from a glass.
That seemed to be a sign that she was not working at the moment.
"…"
Shigara Masami seemed devil-may-care at first glance, but something caught Kyousuke's attention. This card game had been arranged for children, but it still included all of the Materials that could be summoned with the 3rd Summoning Ceremony, aka the Blood-Sign Method. That

included the Regulation-class, the Divine-class, the Unexplored-class…and even the White Queen, the peak of the peak.
The card illustrations were hand drawn and given cute deformed proportions, but how had Shigara Masami learned the traits of all of those Materials and what they looked like?
Inside the Artificial Sacred Ground created when an Incense Grenade detonated, no cameras or sensors could see the summoners or Materials. That meant she had not used photographs or videos as reference material. That was simply not an option.
Then had she seen them all with her own eyes?
The other developers estimated the names of the individual Materials that were theorized to exist based on the spelling of the ones proven to exist, but had she actually seen them?
Simply putting together all of the names and Sound Ranges would have taken a lot of effort.
Even the round Mock Battlefield in the center of the Miniature Garden had not seen every last Material yet.
“Hmm? What is it, boy? Oh, are you feeling the seduction of this sinful young woman?”
The developer who gave him an intoxicated look was still nothing more than devil-may-care.
And just as he opened his mouth, Biondetta called out to him after losing badly.
“Kyousuke! You come over here too! Go beat up the Queen of Hearts and Hatter who keep using cruel combos!!”
“Why are you summoning a human instead of a Material? …Well, whatever. Kyousuke! I’ll defeat you next.”
His older sister beckoned him over with a fingertip, so Kyousuke sighed and left Shigara Masami. The adult simply waved goodbye.
The battle began on the desk like a practice run on paper.
Biondetta played the role of the referee.
“Ready, set, go!”
Kyousuke and Kyoumi both played their first cards.
“The Original Yellow (s).”
“Geh. I’m the Original Green (k). My Sound Range loses.”
The Queen of Hearts lamented, but she was not that worried. This card game did not focus as much on the very first move as chess and Reversi. By playing more cards, they could build up their Material to make it stronger and stronger.
And then Kyousuke made an announcement.
“Check.”
“?”
“Sorry. I have the ‘White’ Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz). That’s an instant kill.”

“Gyahhh!?” screamed Shiroyama Kyoumi as she threw her cards into the air.
The White Queen.
She was the strongest of the strongest who assured victory once she was summoned.
Just like the big bang, the theory behind her was understood, but it was thought they would never actually see her.
In poker terms, it was like smoothly gathering your cards and grinning with a full house only to have your opponent hit you with a royal flush.
“Y-you just got lucky. That one didn’t count. Kyousuke, I demand a rematch!!”
“Sigh… Complain like that in an actual battle and you’ll end up crawling around like a baby…”
“Deadly shut up! What do you mean you want your noble big sister to submit to you in absolute defeat mode!?”
The Queen of Hearts blushed and began the rematch.
But once more…
“Oh, I have the White Queen.”
“Gwaaahhh!”
“Sorry. The White Queen again.”
“Gyahhh!!”
“The Queen.”
“…!!!???”
It looked like they were going to keep playing forever, so Biondetta stepped in as the referee while looking really bored.
“Wait. Isn’t the White Queen going to Kyousuke way too often? Are you cheating somehow?”
“I’m really not sure what to tell you.”
They tried swapping out decks and Biondetta kept a watchful eye on Kyousuke’s cards from behind him. And then the Queen of Hearts, the Mad Hatter, and space suit Humpty Dumpty all tried to battle him.
“The White Queen.”
“Ghahh!?”
“Sigh…. Why do I keep getting her? It’s the White Queen.”
“Psshhh. Th-this isn’t due to your own skill!”
He made short work of all his older siblings.
But even as those older siblings lay collapsed on the floor before him, it was Biondetta watching his hand as the referee who was trembling most of all.
She knew better than anyone that he had done nothing suspicious.
And yet the White Queen seemed to always find her way into his hand.
How was that anything but unfair?
It was a miracle…or a nightmare.
“Hmm. He may just be more compatible…”
Shigara Masami casually spoke up while chugging her clear liquid a short distance away.

“Hic. He may have been born under a star of great love from the Queen.”

Facts

- Kyousuke wanted to save everyone. And that everyone included the White Queen. In order to throw out the original plan of killing the Queen, he named his ship of salvation the White Queen.
- Operation March Hare split the White Queen into multiple individuals to destroy the concept of an alibi and then tricked her into thinking the others were Kyousuke so she would obey their commands.
- Kyousuke freed the Queen from that horrifying deceit, but that sent her on a rampage that caused gruesome damage. At the very least, that rampage killed Akura Taisaku and Shiroyama Kyoumi.
- The specific Queen who was with Kyousuke was named Mary Ann instead of Alice. If she kept her promise not to hurt anyone, there is no chance at all she survived. Paradoxically, whichever Queen it was that survived is a murderous Queen.
- To save the rampaging Queen, Kyousuke abandoned his value as a precision guided missile.
- The rampaging Queen rejected the salvation Kyousuke offered her. She was not willing to regain what is right if it means losing her love for Shiroyama Kyousuke.
- Because Shiroyama Kyousuke chose to protect what is right and because the White Queen chose to protect her love, a rift opened between them.
- And the hopeless battle known as the Secret War has begun.

Stage 04: The Calamity was Named, the Secret War

“Why don’t I kill you, brother?”
“Do you really not understand why?”
(Stage 04 Open 11/12 20:10 “War of the White Apocalypse”)
The Calamity was Named, the Secret War

Part 1

He never stood a chance.
An explosion struck Kyousuke before he could get in any kind of attack, so he should not have been able to even stand up. This went beyond issues of willpower and guts; the bones themselves were broken in multiple places. He had no guarantee his organs were unharmed and he was honestly lucky to have only taken this much damage after being caught in the pure white light brought by the Queen.
So it was likely nothing he had done that had kept him from dying in that first hit.
“Kyousuke-kun!!”
A voice cut in from the side.
A woman with a long black ponytail wore a lab coat over a dark blue tight suit.
She was Madam Professor Shigara Masami.
No, it was not just her.
He heard several muffled breaths. It was the guards in charge of security at the Queen’s Miniature Garden. Those unidentifiable summoners wore gas masks that hid their faces, explosion-resistant jackets that covered their bodies, and several devices that resembled octopus tentacle that attached to their waists.
But they lacked vessels.

Their firearms were worthless against the White Queen. And even if they were perfectly supplied with vessels, Incense Grenades, and Blood-Signs, how could they stand up to the White Queen, that strongest of the strongest who signaled the end of the match as soon as she was summoned!?
“…Stop…”
In his T-shirt and shorts, Kyousuke clenched his teeth against the pain of his broken bones and forced out his voice.
“This is my responsibility. It’s all my fault, so stop…!!”
“Not a chance.”
He was cut off by a masked man who did not turn around.
That faceless man enjoyed baking cakes and had occasionally left homemade sweets in the refrigerator for the 15 children.
“We were wrong to force this onto a single child all this time. So give us a chance to make up for it.”
No, that was not his point.
Kyousuke wanted to shout back, but the intense pain sealed his mouth.
Shigara Masami picked up his small battered body.
“Madam, get him to the emergency elevator evacuation route. I can’t say how long the backup power will last.”
“Please… If we survive this, let’s go get a drink together and discuss these memories.”
“Stop that. My tendency to fall for women has caused me way too much pain in the past.”
They all began to move.
The gas mask troops would hold off the White Queen even one second longer if it would protect the small life in Shigara Masami’s arms.
Everything was destroyed.
What Kyousuke had truly wanted to protect was smashed beyond recognition.
“Broootherrr…”
An insane voice slammed into his body.
But who was it that had driven her insane?
Who was at fault for not stopping it before this happened?
“Broooooooootherrrr

She removed the ID card from her lab coat chest and had helpless Kyousuke hold it. Then she looked around and stopped her eyes on a certain spot. She caught a glimpse of white and pink.
“You there! Detta-chan!”
“…”
“Take care of Kyousuke-kun. You can use the elevator with this card. You know where that is, right? Go!!”
A frightening tremor reached them from behind.
After leaving unmoving Kyousuke with Biondetta, Shigara Masami turned around with her lab coat fluttering behind her.
By leaving her ID card with the children, she was abandoning her own opportunity to open the elevator door.
“Kh…ahhh…!!”
In his T-shirt and shorts, Kyousuke desperately tried to move his broken arms to grab at the back of her lab coat.
But he did not accomplish anything.
Still in Biondetta’s arms, he alone was taken to safety once more.
Meanwhile, he heard shaking all around him.
Shigara Masami and the adults Kyousuke had never met would be caught in that and they would be fighting and falling. And it was all to protect this small life, as if to say it was irrelevant that he did not actually know them.
“It’ll be okay,” said the young demon while her short skirt fluttered. “Your big sister will protect you. So it’ll be okay, Kyousuke!!”
He did not know how to respond.
He knew he had to shout something, but the words caught in his throat and nothing came out.
With nowhere to go, the torrent of emotions escaped his eyes instead of his mouth.
Oh, he realized.
Was he crying?
Was he pathetically shedding tears?
But why?
Because he had not noticed the distortion to the Queen’s Miniature Garden? Because the White Queen had broken through her bonds? Because the people he had wanted to protect were vanishing into the white light and the rubble?
He was losing everything.
Because he had lost any path except for opposing “her”?
The two of them finally arrived at the emergency elevator. There were several elevators in a row, but the single ID card could only open one of them.
But that was as far as they got.
However, not because of the White Queen.
“Hey, Kyousuke.”
A low, low voice stopped them.

It was the top of the rotting ranking board. It was the summoner with messy blond hair and brown skin who undeniably had the most skill of the 15.
It was Alberto S. Divinesmith the Hatter.
That devil sneered with a vessel girl bound by an iron maiden device.
“Let’s have some fun here. Once the protective circle is set up, your broken arms and legs won’t matter. Yeah, for as long as the Summoning Ceremony battle lasts.”
“Do you not know what’s happening right now!?”
“That doesn’t matter.”
A single silver coin danced between Alberto’s fingers. More and more and more identical coins stacked on top of it to create a heavy Blood-Sign made of metal.
“As long as you’ll pour all your strength into this moment, anything’s fine. Yes, yes. It’s been like that ever since the Mock Battlefield was taken from me. But now I’m finally living in a world of color again.”
The Hatter held a practice Blood-Sign in addition to the silver one. But he was not going to fight with two. He tossed the practice stick over to set the stage.
But it was not Kyousuke who caught it.
Biondetta stuck her hand out and caught it instead.
“…Go on ahead, Kyousuke.”
The ID card from Shigara Masami was an unreliable thread, but Biondetta also let go of it. After the emergency elevator door opened, she shoved the barely moving boy inside and then lightly grabbed her waitress miniskirt.
A metal sphere one size smaller than a baseball fell from between her legs.
“This is a farewell gift.”
“Wait, Biondetta! *You*-…”
“If he gets serious, the entire elevator shaft will be destroyed. Someone has to hold him off.”
He was not given a chance to reply.
Biondetta Shiroyama took a step back from the elevator that would allow her to escape. She returned to hell, but she gave him an oddly gentle smile while still holding the bottom of her short waitress skirt.
“It’ll be okay. I’m your big sister, so I’ll protect you.”
The iron door closed from both sides.
The thin lifeline made of metal rapidly ascended with only the greatest sinner of all onboard.

“…I’m surprised,” said the Mad Hatter in the depths of hell. “You were just as focused on holing up in your room and tricking the Queen as any of us. So why are you still so fixated on that family crap? Maybe the Fifteen Siblings Project did succeed in some way.”
“No.” Biondetta shook her head at the brown-skinned boy’s words while holding the practice Blood-Sign so tightly it creaked. “I’m just about at my

limit. I've been assisting other people with their revenge while that boy wasn't looking. If I had to look at Kyousuke's face any longer, I would probably throttle him out of pure hatred."
"…"
"You don't hate Kyousuke. I can tell. …After all, it was I, Biondetta Shiroyama, who received the Queen's hatred."
Through Shiroyama Kyousuke's Sewn Realm Summoning and the March Hare derived from it, everyone had pretended to be Kyousuke to control the White Queen.
But in the end, it had not fulfilled them. Even when they could perfectly rule her and completely control her, the White Queen was not looking at them.
They had only been watching her whisper words of love for a fictional Shiroyama Kyousuke and unconditionally trust him. And that love and trust was much, much deeper than for any family or sibling. After watching her, they were convinced that they could search all across the world and never find someone they could rely on so comfortably.
Biondetta did not know what the grownups had thought.
But the 14 children besides Kyousuke had received something other than love.
In Biondetta's case, that was the Queen's hatred.
And in Alberto's case…
"The Queen's ferocity."
The hatter directly answered in a clear voice.
It was as if the fog of madness had cleared from his mind for a brief moment.
"I just wanted to save the vessels. I wanted to do something about those 3 who were passed around for contract after contract until their bodies were worn down both inside and out. So I thought I could tear down the Mock Battlefield by going along with Akura's plan and taking the strongest spot for myself. I didn't expect for Kyousuke to take the White Queen for himself, but anything was fine as long as those vessels wouldn't be worn down any longer."
"That doesn't make sense. You hated us for taking the Mock Battlefield from you, didn't you?"
"It was no use. Do you know what happened to the vessels after those battles were taken from them and they weren't needed to hold Materials inside themselves? You wouldn't. Of course you wouldn't. You were all so fixated on the Queen that you wouldn't know *where the vessels were* after that."
No vessel was needed to permanently summon the White Queen.
There had been no need to summon any of the inferior Materials.
So those girls had been abandoned with almost innocent cruelty.
And as he watched the vessels rotting away with no place left for them… something had broken inside the Hatter.
"We can only live alongside monsters."

The blond madman smiled.
No, it was not actually the Hatter who was mad. It was the tea party being held around him.
“So let’s enjoy this to the very end. Because this is how we live. I received the Queen’s ferocity! This charisma takes joy in battle and is moved to emotion by battle!! Now, it might be only a brief dream, but I will give you vessels the power you need to take the next step forward!!”
Someone stood next to Waitress Biondetta.
It was a woman with a silver bob cut. Her entire body was tightly bound by belt-like restraints. A ring of metal surrounded her head along the forehead line and it had plugs along the inside, making it a modern version of the crown of thorns. This was another of the vessels, but since the 3 vessels existed as a category, they had to have had as close a relationship as the 15 did.
And yet they chose to oppose each other.
Even if it was for a second or a mere moment, they wanted to immerse themselves in an all-out battle that tore at their souls.
“I received the Queen’s hatred.”
There was a quiet tearing sound.
To bind a contract with the vessel, Biondetta had bit into the side of her lip with her canine tooth and allowed a bead of blood to appear. She felt like that rusty flavor definitively remade who she was.
Whether she lived or died, she was a big sister no longer.
Shiroyama Kyousuke.
When they next met, she would have become someone else entirely.
Nevertheless, Biondetta Shiroyama shook off that thought and wiped the blood from her lip. She pressed her red-dyed fingertip toward the vessel’s mouth to bind them together.
She gave up on herself as a person.
A personality had been awkwardly growing in the depths of her mind, but now she heard it burning away.
And the two of them spoke in unison as summoners, the devices meant to surpass the gods.
“Now, time for the *final* battle!!”
“Now, time for the *final* battle!!”

Part 2

A woman with a long ponytail wore a lab coat over her dark blue tight suit.

Shigara Masami faced a monster in the pile of rubble that had no more walls or Great Ceiling.
Unexplored-class. Sound Range: None. Cost: 21.
The “White” Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
An incarnation of benevolence, a symbol of sanctity, and a personification of radiance.
She knew the identity and true nature of what she faced, but the charisma was so overwhelming that she might have thrown out every last assumption and bowed down on the spot if she let her guard down even slightly.
“…Oh? You aren’t going to run for your pathetic little life?”
“And have you finally decided to speak with people other than Kyousuke-kun?”
The White Queen purely tilted her head at that question.
Had killing so many of her own caused some kind of change?
“You were always a being that would harm mankind. No matter how you might feel, that will never change. You might not mean any harm. There is nothing at fault in a perfect being like you and the creatures we call humans might just be too weak in comparison. But no matter how misguided it might be, you will bring us harm and not benefit.”
Shigara Masami did not care and spoke as if singing to herself.
She did not give in and took a step forward.
“When I hoped to save you or that someone would save you, I had given up somewhere in my heart. I was free to dream because I never thought any of it was realistic. That was all I thought it was.”
She stepped toward the White Queen.
Toward that peak of the peak.
“And that’s why I was dazzled when I saw Kyousuke-kun. I started thinking ‘what if’ or ‘could it be’. That dream was so heavy I gave up on it, but I tried to force it onto those small shoulders.”
She spoke to her.
She blocked her way.
“Queen, let’s end this. The dream I held in Kyousuke-kun and the hope you held in him will bring him far too much suffering. It may have been of a different type, but both of us forced our mistakes onto him, so at least allow me to clean up after myself.”
Shigara Masami reached a slender hand back and stuck it into her large ponytail. And then she pulled something out.
It was a small glass bottle that sealed a bright blue sticky fluid inside.
She threw it to her feet where it shattered and the slime surrounded Shigara Masami. Its rotation picked up speed until it sharpened into something like an upside-down tornado. In the blink of an eye, it transformed into a single long stick.
It was a Blood-Sign.
The White Queen did not laugh when she saw it.

“Are you trying to come between my brother and me with that?”
“I am Freedom Award 3000, World Complete.”
Shigara Masami’s eyes silently narrowed.
She released into the world a name entirely different from the kind and harmless one of Government’s Madam Professor.
“Government, Illegal, and Freedom. While passing between all three major powers, I *ended up completing every last one of* the 1000 tasks they each gave me. At the very least, I should hold your interest more than bullying some fleeing children.”
Shiroyama Kyousuke had been mistaken.
The truly powerful was not Humanism, Open Bluff, and Perfect Equilibrium who reigned on the underside of the world. The underside of the underside was the topside. A single woman had reached greater heights than anyone, but she remained alongside her fellow man more than anyone while adding a hint of humanity into the purely coldhearted systems she so hated.
She had once said that the Miniature Garden was headed in a wicked direction, but that resolving it by force would break the container and allow the wickedness to spill out. That also meant that she alone could have destroyed that container and brought ruin to the entire Miniature Garden, including the 15 geniuses.
She heard a quiet animal cry.
Was it a squirrel or a ferret? The small animal poked its head out from the neck of her lab coat. That was the animal vessel she was contracted with. This was an extension of the idea that deer or bears could be made divine and used as messengers of a god. And its front paws held an Incense Grenade like it was a walnut.
She was the strongest of the human side.
So even if she had her pride, she also understood.
(I know I can’t win…)
“Now, it’s time for a battle between two who have mastered their fields, Your Majesty.”
“Tsk, tsk, tsk.”
But the White Queen wagged her index finger.
She went out of her way to interact with this puny human. She showed her respect for this summoner who had desperately gathered so many Awards, but she also immediately corrected the woman.
“You still don’t have ‘Loved by the White’ or ‘White Slayer’.”
A hopeless tremor further destroyed the Queen’s Miniature Garden.

Part 3

In his T-shirt and shorts, Kyousuke rode the emergency escape elevator all on his own.
That last thread of hope made of modern machinery swiftly pulled the survivor up from that hell 500 meters underground.
(If I can get to the top…)
He kept his woozy mind active and desperately thought about what he could do, whether it was the best, second best, or whatever other option.
(If I can get to the surface, I'll find the team meant to kill the Queen. With their help, I might be able to pull the others up from underground!)
But that did not last forever.
With a loud clunk like a gear jamming, the elevator came to a grinding halt.
His bones were already broken, but he bounced up from the floor, fell back down, and was thrown into a world of pain.
"Khah…ah…!?"
He did not have time to writhe around.
Something like white claws tore into the rectangular box like the thick blade of a can opener digging into a metal lid.
What were those?
They were white. So were they a part of the Queen? Had her clothing or something else transformed into them???
"Kh…!!"
It was all for naught if he was caught here.
The elevator was dangling in midair and it had probably risen 200 meters.
Biondetta, Alberto, and other survivors had to still be down there. It was unclear how much accurate information had gotten out or how far it had spread, but it had to mean a lot that all of this had been caused by Shiroyama Kyousuke himself.
Unable to even stand up, he crawled over to the elevator panel. He grabbed at the metal fragment torn by the White Queen's claws and he turned the screws to pry it open.
All the while, an ominous creaking surrounded him.
It should not have taken her even a second to crush the entire elevator.
"…Brother…"
A voice called for him from the depths of hell.
It was probably a lot harder to extract him from the box without crushing him.
But that hesitation opened the next path forward.
"Brooootherrrrrrrrrrrr…"
If dying would have brought it all to an end, he would have torn his own heart out right that instant. But this was not so kind. Committing suicide now would only be a way of running from his responsibility.
(There are 4 emergency escape elevators. The control panels are connected through the internal network, so this will work!)

Kyousuke grabbed the round metal sphere that Biondetta had given him. He pulled out the pin with his mouth and tossed it into a gap in the jagged torn wall.
He doubted it was an Incense Grenade.
Incense Grenades were fine-tuned for each individual summoner, so Biondetta giving Kyousuke hers would have accomplished nothing. That meant it was disguised as an Incense Grenade while containing normal explosives. It was likely meant to blow up another summoner while pretending to start a Summoning Ceremony battle. It was a cruel trick for use against her siblings.
At any rate, he let it detonate.
While fully contained in the gap, the grenade did not scatter an explosive blast and shrapnel. Instead, it blew open the wall. And with an ear-splitting roar, the elevator itself tilted diagonally.
Kyousuke rolled along the floor.
And he did not hesitate to jump right toward the large hole in the wall.
“Brooooooooootherrrr

Was something happening here too?
“Someone…”
He dragged his aching body and used his dried throat to force out a voice.
“Someone please come here!! The Miniature Garden…everyone is down in the Miniature Garden…!!”
No one responded.
Kyousuke crawled along the dirty ground like a caterpillar and tried to find out what was happening. He moved to the hill Biondetta had once shown him.
He had no idea how many times he nearly passed out before arriving at that point giving him a view of the wandering land.
His T-shirt and shorts were filthy by the time he saw it.
The trees of the tropical forest had been felled or burned away.
And the entire land was covered in a horrifying swarm of Materials.
Due to the tides and the accumulation of sand, the area around the Miniature Garden was cut off by seawater, making it something of a large island.
And that entire island had become hell on earth.
He seriously doubted these were vessels being controlled by summoners.
For one thing, there was no Artificial Sacred Ground in effect.
And yet hundreds, if not thousands…no, even more monsters were enveloping the lower world. They might be a giant collection of gears, countless wolves connected by the single shadow they shared, an endlessly swollen eyeball, or a suit of armor with nothing inside.
And those Regulation-classes were joined by a group of what were clearly the gods of legend as they spread destruction endlessly. Beams of light surged out and explosions erupted. The forest was carved away, the distant bridge was broken at its relay points, and large pillars of water rose from the ocean. Were those caused by submarines exploding underwater?
The occasional Incense Grenade was thrown and Artificial Sacred Grounds opened here and there, but they were tiny. They were miniscule. In the face of the fury covering the entire land rising from the ocean, they looked like no more than small bubbles doomed to pop.
That was the source of the angry and fearful shouting.
The Cost and Sound Range were irrelevant. They could not even set up a one-on-one battle. When surrounded by Materials of multiple Sound Ranges and Costs, the proper summoners and vessels could not even hope to fight.
They had already forgotten to function as a group, so they were running around like a swarm of bees was after them.
They tried to escape the hellish battlefield, but they could not.
The bridge had fallen and the submarines had exploded and sunk.
(Wait. The ocean…?)
Kyousuke moved his muddy face to check on that again.
Yes, the ocean.

The Materials were pushing in from the beach like white waves. Their numbers knew no bounds, so it looked like they were crawling endlessly from the seawater.
“Ah.”
He realized it. He realized the truth.
The Sewn Realm Summoning he had used to summon the White Queen was based on the fairy’s spring seen in fairy tales and children’s books. That meant water defined the line dividing this world from the other.
Was that why?
As the Queen lost control and her power surged out, the entire surrounding ocean had become a spring that summoned “fairies”. The surface team had suddenly been surrounded by Materials from the ocean all around them, so they had been unable to continue on or fall back. Destruction had been their only option.
It had happened again.
Yet again, Shiroyama Kyousuke had pulled the trigger on all these lost lives.
“Ahhhh

“The transport helicopters are gathered on the eastern plain. That’s our last escape route. Not only are you from the 15, but you were the one from the special Queen killing team. You’ll get the VIP treatment, so they’re sure to give you a spot.”
“St…stop…”
“Sorry, but you can complain later.”
An unbelievable tremor reached them.
The entire battlefield sticking up from the surrounding ocean like an island had split like a cookie.
Pure white light welled up from directly below. And that antlion pit swallowed up everything. The ground crumbled and collapsed in a mortar shape, but the man desperately ran to the eastern plain with Kyousuke in his arms.
The ground could crumble away below his feet and drag them into that underground world at any second.
Nevertheless, a few people in military uniforms passed them going the other way.
Those people were turning their backs on the escape route and running to the core of the fighting in the center of the mortar.
They were recklessly fighting the White Queen.
The blond man spoke to them as they passed by.
“Sorry, I promise I’ll catch up with you!!”
“Don’t worry about it. Just one of the children? You did well to make it this far. Leave the rest to us and get on that rescue chopper!!”
They did not stand a chance.
Their odds were suspect even at the best of times, but now that they were no longer functioning as a group, they would end up facing the White Queen as individuals, ensuring an immediate defeat.
Several white beams scorched the air as if passing by Kyousuke and the man as they kept their backs to the center of the blast.
Each of those beams must have been taking an unbelievable number of lives.
The earth and even the clouds in the sky were split as the divinely bright light poured down. Something like white feathers began covering the entire area like snow that dyed everything white.
The world was changing. It was being recolored.
It was becoming pure white.
“Listen, boy.”
All the while, the large bond man did not stop running.
But not to save himself. He had told the other soldiers he would catch up to them. So once he left Kyousuke with the helicopter, he would turn right back toward that deadly battlefield.
“You worked hard. That White Queen is enough to make a group of grown men shake in their boots, but you kept challenging her until your tiny body

was this beaten up. So, boy, that effort gives you that much more of a right to seek happiness. If it didn't, this world wouldn't be worth fighting for!"
Kyousuke wanted to snap back on reflex and tell the man he was wrong.
But the words would not come out.
There was an open clearing within the felled and burnt tropical forest. A group of helicopters were already preparing to take off.
"Please wait!!"
The blond man shouted over the rotor wind while holding Kyousuke.
One of the helicopters had already taken off and it was mercilessly shot down by one of the Queen's beams of light as it gained altitude.
"From how you're dressed, I'm guessing you're a Government research group. Please, take this kid with you! If I said I know Humanism, would that be enough to warrant a favor!!"
"We're already over our 20 person capacity. Can't you wait for the next flight!?"
"You know damn well there won't be a next flight." The large man was soaked with sweat. "I'm not talking about me. I left my Government family, so I'm not selfish enough to think you'll take me in now. But that has nothing to do with this kid! So please!! Can't you do something!?"
Someone in the helicopter clicked their tongue.
And everyone inside had the same opinion.
"If you're getting on, then hurry it up! Hurry!!"
"Thanks!!"
The blond man very carefully handed over Kyousuke whose bones were broken.
He did not try to board the helicopter himself.
And the developers onboard looked shocked.
"What about you!?"
"Didn't I tell you? Does the name Claude Magentarain mean anything to you? I'm an outsider that left Government and joined Freedom. With all this chaos, there's got to be a vessel that lost their summoner wandering around somewhere. I'll find one, bind a contract, and then go for the White Queen. So don't worry about it. You all get out of here!!"
It was true they did not have time to wait around.
Even if they escaped into the air, carelessly gaining too much altitude would get them pierced by the Queen's beams of light.
And the helicopter took off, leaving Kyousuke's savior on the ground.
The man named Claude narrowed his eyes and watched it leave.
And then a few of the developers next to Kyousuke jumped down from the ascending helicopter.
Claude was as surprised as anyone.
He was not the only fool who would waste his own chance to board the ark.
"What are you doing!?"

“We said we were over the 20 person capacity, didn’t we? It would probably just crash like that, so that kid has more of a chance of surviving if we lighten the load.”
One of the men in lab coats was far too skinny to fight, but he still forced a smile.
In fact, all of them were afraid.
But they had still come.
After all…
“Also, you’re not an outsider any longer.”
The lab coat man stuck a hand in his pocket, pulled out a handgun, and pressed the grip into Claude’s hand.
Claude was taken aback, but then he smiled and accepted the gun.
“So where should we start, summoner!? We only do logistical support, so tell us what we can do!!”
“First, gather any isolated vessels who have lost their partner. If we can join together everyone without a partner, we can reassemble a fighting force. Let’s show her humanity’s strength! If we reform a proper group, we can still fight!!”
That was when they heard static.
A transmission reached their radios.
“Attention, everyone! We have contacted Humanism, Open Bluff, and Perfect Equilibrium!! On their instructions, we will begin a simultaneous saturation attack using the Unexplored-class!! This is our first and last chance to push back the White Queen. Everyone who can participate is to gather at the following location!!!!!”
“Sounds like every last one of us is a damn fool…”
They were watching the end of the world, but oddly enough, they smiled.
“The leaders of the three major powers are the ultimate VIPs, so they could have used their authority to get on those helicopters.”
“If they were the type to do that, they wouldn’t have ended up at the top.”
True enough, thought Claude.
It all looked like hell on earth, but that was not all it was.
The faintest heat seemed to have great meaning specifically because they were in hell.
They ran through the burning forest to reach the source of the pure white light.
There was only one thing on their minds: They would show the Queen what human strength was.

Part 4

“What? You didn’t run off?” asked Humanism.
The gothic lolita kimono girl stood in the burning world.
She was answered by Open Bluff, the head of Illegal.
“I could ask you the same thing. You can only throw out the ideal and choose what is right, so I thought you would’ve been the first one out of here.”
At this point, the tense atmosphere between the three major powers had vanished.
Did they understand that those matters were of no importance here?
“I do not know what the ideal is.”
Their lives would end in just a few minutes.
Whether the war was won or lost, there was no saving the summoners on the front line. The White Queen was not an opponent they could hope to defeat unscathed.
“But I gave a lot of thought to what was the most right and what would be the most beneficial.”
“…”
“All we did was push back at each other, so perhaps the world would be better off with the lifestyle of that boy who tried to have everyone get along despite knowing how reckless that was. Fighting to leave that seed behind might not be a bad idea.”
“You moron. That’s what we call a dream. And that’s a privilege only afforded to people.”
Humanism gave him a blank look, but Open Bluff did not care and continued.
“Hey, while I’m at it, could you teach me one thing at the very end here?”
“Teach you what? The pure justice that Illegal hates so much?”
“No.”
He took a long stick from a subordinate – it was the basic kind of sacred tree Blood-Sign that Humanism seemed to like – and he announced his conviction.
“For the first time in my life, I feel like using my own hands to fight for this thing we call the world. So teach this Award 0 how to fight using the Summoning Ceremony.”
“Heh heh. Ah hah hah hah! So we have a complete beginner on our hands here, do we!?”
For a brief moment, the two of them laughed like old friends.
But they were rudely interrupted by Perfect Equilibrium, the head of Freedom and the resident of the world of sleep. Or she should have been. But now she was shockingly wide awake.
“So how many people do you think we can gather? We seem to have lost all contact with that Award 3000 Madam.”
“…Well, we don’t stand a chance either way.” Humanism honestly admitted that, but she still coldly calculated out the numbers. “Let’s ignore what group anyone belongs to. The summoners and vessels are scattered, so it

would be more efficient to shuffle them all up between the major powers and rebind the contracts."
"Anything's fine if it will end this racket and let me get back to sleep."
They heard footsteps behind them.
The vessels who followed those summoners also seemed to be ready.
Humanism smiled fiercely as she adjusted her grip on the most basic practice Blood-Sign.
"Then let's show that White Queen just what a leader is and just how stubborn we can be!!"

Part 5

The transport helicopter carried injured Kyousuke through the sky.
The battlefield below them was not just burning; it was glowing like lava.
The earth itself had crumbled like a cookie and pure white light surged out from the cracks.
The sporadic fighting had ended and the remaining fighting force seemed to be regrouping.
The clash would begin before long.
Hundreds if not thousands of Unexplored-classes would be forced out and used as a simultaneous saturation attack to push back the White Queen.
"…"
This showdown would cost many lives and it would make the White Queen the one and only bad guy.
What was right and what was wrong?
Kyousuke's woozy mind could not find the answer.
But there was one thing he knew.
This was not the end of the White Queen.
This half-measure would never settle things.
The world shook violently.
And as Kyousuke looked down at the battlefield from the open cargo door, he recalled Lewis Carroll's fairy tale. He remembered the story he had told the White Queen.
Lewis Carroll had boldly included nonsense, absurdities, contradictions, and paradoxes, but there was apparently one rule or pattern that only he could understand. In that story with no standard structure at all, there were a few similar incidents throughout.
One of those was the eternal girl changing size. In one case, she had grown to giant size.

“Broooooooooooooootherrrr

In his T-shirt and shorts, Kyousuke forcibly stretched out his broken arm and grabbed one of the retrieved objects. It was a Blood-Sign that likely belonged to a dead summoner.
And he shook everything off as he stood on his own two feet once more.
He had no vessel and he had no Incense Grenade. He could not use the Summoning Ceremony and he could not have defeated the White Queen even if he could.
He understood all that.
And yet…
“Queeee

“…How could I understand?”
“…”
“No matter how great a tragedy it was and no matter how dreadful the truth was, I had to have been able to save you there. But I let go of that possibility! I turned my back on what was right and reached for that empty and false love!! I, Shiroyama Kyousuke, should have thrown it all away. And as a result, so many lives have been needlessly lost! How could anyone ever forgive me!!!???”
“There are some things,” the White Queen did not take a step back even as she was torn to shreds, “that you can never let go of no matter how great a contradiction they bring. That is what we call love. Although you might not yet understand that, brother.”
“I don’t need that.”
Kyousuke clenched his teeth and rejected it in the Queen’s hands.
He chose what was right over love.
…More and more people would die.
He knew that. The deaths of so many influential and powerful people would influence both the hidden world of the Summoning Ceremony and the ignorant outside world and that would cause even more people to suffer.
He could not stop any of it.
He could not prevent the changing of the age.
But.
Even so.
He would save as many as he could. He was one of the people who had caused that age, so he could not ignore the voices of the people struggling, suffering, being tossed about, and asking for help from the bottom of their heart.
He wanted to be someone like that.
No.
He would become that here.
He would become the strongest.
He would become the strongest human who would not let any Regulation-class, Divine-class, Unexplored-class, the Three beyond them, or even the White Queen at the peak of the peak do as they pleased.
“I don’t need that! I’ll eliminate it here before that happens!! I’ll throw out all of my weakness to settle things with you!!”
And Shiroyama Kyousuke completed himself.
He became a true precision guided missile that had completely cast out one half of his love and hatred for a certain girl.
“I won’t…forgive you.”
He wobbled.
The last strand of consciousness was snapping in the Queen’s hands.
“I will never…forgive you…Queen…”
He had never spoken in this tone before and his logic was unreadable.
This boy should have been the closest to her, but he felt the farthest away.

“…”
The peak of the peak looked down at the unconscious boy with an unbelievable expression.
Her face was crumpled up.
“I am the peak of the Unexplored-class beyond the gods, so there is nothing I cannot do. Eventually, the day will surely come. I swear to you we will hold each other’s hands again.”
And she could not continue like this forever.
The White Queen returned to her normal size. She was only human-sized, but the power inside her was not affected. And she laid Kyousuke’s battered and broken body on the ground.
She looked around.
She was surrounded on all sides by a group of Unexplored-classes. There were hundreds if not thousands of them. Government, Illegal, and Freedom were working together to force the White Queen back with the violence of numbers and send her back to the other world. It was the first and last counterattack.
It was all about timing.
If she was taken out now, Kyousuke’s unconscious form would be caught in it.
Unlike the peak of the Unexplored-class, that small boy would be crushed and killed even if none of the attacks directly hit him. He was not using the Blood-Sign method of the Summoning Ceremony, so she could not share her power with him in the form of a protective circle.
The boy would die.
He would simply die.
“…Fine, then.”
The White Queen reignited once more.
She chose love over what was right and chose to accept all this hatred for the boy she loved.
And in doing so, she would protect him.
She would protect him to the end.
She would protect the one precious person she had found in this world.
She would protect the person who briefly allowed her to forget the extreme madness inside her.
“My name is *Mary Ann*. I am my brother’s sword and shield and I have been promised the love of the one who named me. So I will utterly destroy all who would harm him!!”
And.
A war came to an entirely meaningless end.

A Happy Memory from an Unknown Point on the Timeline 4

“Eh heh heh. We’ll be together forever, brother!”
“Hm? Why even bother mentioning something so obvious???”

Facts

- Shigara Masami was actually the truly powerful who earned every Award from all three major powers. But she still did not earn Loved by the White or White Slayer. That means the White Queen has her own unique Awards that are not part of the three major powers.
- The Hatter decided to become the strongest when he could not bear seeing the vessels worn down after being used over and over. But when the Mock Battlefield stopped being used, the vessels lost their place and slowly broke.
- To protect Kyousuke, Biondetta accepted the Queen’s hatred and underwent a transformation.
- Claude risked his life to save young Kyousuke. He had no reason. Most likely, it was the same as when he had once saved Azalea’s life.
- Kyousuke held both love and hatred for the White Queen, but in order to eventually settle things with her, he threw out that weakness.
- Summoner Shiroyama Kyousuke’s speech and behavior patterns were determined at that time.
- At the very, very end, Kyousuke wanted to save at least one person. But that very action gave the final push to the White Queen’s back.
- At the end of the Secret War, the White Queen continued to take every last attack to protect a single person and she named herself as Mary Ann. Then which White Queen was it that survived and continues to oppose Kyousuke?

Ending X-01: A Single Soul that Survived

“…How could I possibly forgive her?”
“How could I possibly understand her…!?”
(Ending X-01 Open 06/13 11:00 “After the War”)
A Single Soul that Survived

There was nothing there.
The bridge connecting the mainland to the large island had fully recovered from the “accidental collapse”, so the scars of the White Queen’s destruction had been cleanly erased. More than 5 years had passed since then. The wandering land had always been changing shape as if the earth itself was moving and the highly fertile tropical plants and trees had grown back. The passage of time had covered the exposed land once more.
So no one would guess that such a tragedy occurred there.
Everyone who knew had died or dived down to the hidden side of the world.
“…”
Shiroyama Kyousuke was one such person.
That boy had been the most at fault, had been the most sinful, had gotten the most other people involved, and had lost the most.
Even so, it could have been much worse.
He still had his life, so he had a chance to challenge her again.
He crouched down and set down a flower as an offering.
The wandering land was fully covered in greenery, but he could see the remains of the former Miniature Garden’s structures that looked like ancient ruins. He was near the elevator he had used to escape. Someone who did not know what it had been would never realize what it was just by looking at it.
The world had grown twisted starting from here.
The three major powers had rapidly changed form after losing the truly powerful. Once summoners and vessels learned it was possible to reach the peak of the Unexplored-class, they lost themselves in strange research. And as a side effect, the world’s gears had shifted out of place on the open side and the hidden side.
The White Queen.
It had all begun at that one point.

“…How could I possibly forgive her?” muttered Kyousuke. “How could I possibly understand her…!?”
His voice reached no one.
After saying goodbye to his brief sentimentality, he quietly stood up and turned his back on his memories.
Killing the Queen.
That lost desire was hidden in his heart.
Freedom Award 903, Alice (with) Rabbit, took the plunge into the cruel hidden side of the world.

Facts

- He has received those memories. But some things cannot be forgiven.

Ending X-02: The Demon’s Contract Leads to a Starting Point

“We might just run into that irreverent group sooner than you might think.”
“Honestly, I’m looking forward to this, Shiroyama Kyousuke.”
(Ending X-02 Open 06/13 11:15 “To the Next War”)
The Demon’s Contract Leads to a Starting Point

With the thrum of a twisted cathode-ray tube, the world disappeared all around him.
“…”
Shiroyama Kyousuke looked around at the gray walls surrounding him.
The rotten green land and the ruins of the Queen’s Miniature Garden were no longer there. He could only see a manmade structure.
This had been a little different from virtual reality.
The concept was more primitive and much more difficult to fully control.
Since prehistoric times, those with souls had entrusted themselves to this fictionally-constructed alternate world.
<How was it?> asked a sleepy feminine voice.
This paranormal being was supported by a giant Box.
Unexplored-class. Sound Range: Middle. Cost: 16.
The Spirit of Fluttering ‘Yellow’ Gills that Rules the Heavens (s – a – so – voz – tix – ei – yw – za).
She herself looked like a human girl in an oriental Taoist outfit. If not for the fact that her hair was pure yellow instead of blonde. And the thing she rested on like a crescent moon bed was strange indeed. A bed shaped like half a sake cup supported giant bird wings, beast legs, a fish body that extended endlessly like a scorpion’s tail, and massive gills. After evolving in all directions to respond to any situation on land, sea, or air, that overgrown mass of flesh looked almost comical.
<My reconstructed experiences included information from an angle you would not have seen yourself. Did you find anything new in the falsehoods that overwrite reality which you call the world of dreams?>
All of the vicarious experiences he had just had were a product of the Yellow Gills’ power.
She was an Unexplored-class that slipped into her enemy’s dreams and unilaterally tormented them to death. In a different way from the Red Lady

or the Wicked Green Woman, she was a force to be reckoned with in a different dimension that entirely ignored any specs or battle preparations made in reality.
“…Yes. I understand a few things now.” Kyousuke’s voice was low. “That White Queen called herself Mary. That means she was the Queen who broke her promise not to hurt anyone!!”

<Yes, but I think you should say she was the Queen who could not bring herself to give up on living with you even if it meant committing that sin.>
The Yellow Gills drowsily leaned back in her bizarre bed that wriggled with countless blood vessels and eyeballs.
<Then again, after everything that happened, I do understand why you can't bring yourself to accept her presence.>
"Don't pretend you weren't involved," spat out Kyousuke. "Freedom's former leader was known as Perfect Equilibrium. She cast aside reality to live in dreams. …Doesn't that sound familiar? You were there too, Yellow Gills!!"
<I just thought I could avoid being summoned by you boring summoners if I pretended to be human and stayed in your world.>
A smile split across the Yellow Gills' face.
<But I changed my mind when the Queen's rampage summoned an endless supply of Materials from the ocean. I couldn't let something similar happen to me. Or rather, it'd be really annoying to have my sleep interrupted. That's why I used the confusion of the Secret War to fake my death and retreated to the 'other world'.>
She made it sound simple, but that would have required numerous impossible tasks to pull off.
First, she would have to allow a Material to exist in this world indefinitely. Then she would have to pretend to be human, bind a contract with a vessel, swing a Blood-Sign around, participate in the Summoning Ceremony, and otherwise act like a summoner. How could she explain the paradoxical situation of a Material summoning a Material?
It was true that the Yellow Gills could not reach the White Queen's level, but couldn't an argument be made that she was even more twisted in a certain way?
<I am the ruler of freedom.>
Her answer to those questions was simple.
<So I absolutely loathe phrases like "that's impossible" or "it can't be done". As the ruler of freedom, I alone get to decide where its boundaries lie and no one else gets a say.>
Was that why she had once defied the White Queen?
Had she wanted to break down the assumption that the Three could not defeat the peak?
But she had failed and fallen to earth.
She had met the same end as Icarus or Lucifer. Perhaps that was one stereotypical form for a legend.
<I have high hopes for you, Kyousuke-kun.>
She giggled as she lay in her bed that was swollen with excessive possibility.
<I hope you can defeat the White Queen. To bring me freedom.>
"…"
Kyousuke did not respond.

He placed his palm on one part of the gray wall and pushed. A rectangular frame became a door that opened outwards.
The sun of early summer pierced his eyes.
It was the dry sunlight of a tropical region.
He had been in a large truck container this entire time. And that cubic space was the Box that supported the Yellow Gills. The entire thing had seemed half in a dream because the Box had contained something far too large to fit in the container. But that monster loved freedom more than anything, so she would probably leave despite the Box once she grew bored.
Kyousuke pulled his smartphone from his pocket.
“Aika, I’m done. I checked, but my information wasn’t wrong.”
“Understood, Onii-chan. The courier headed to the Colorful Museum will pass by you soon on Route 82. But are you really planning to hijack that?”
The Colorful Museum.
That name had been mentioned in his past as well. Without his gallery and funding, the Miniature Garden may have never been more than just the Miniature Garden.
No, that was wrong.
In that case, the three major powers would have begun their war to kill the Queen without delay. And they would have failed somewhere. The number of people lost would have been the same.
In other words, they would all have been wiped out.
Either way, Kyousuke would have pulled the trigger on it all.
Even in the world of hypotheticals, he could not escape his sins.
“That’s the shortest route.”
“I super don’t recommend it.”
He did not have time for cowardice.
During the Pandemonium incident, he had been thoroughly beaten to a pulp by the White Queen. Because there was no way to kill her and the laws needed to do so had been destroyed. The situation was just about hopeless, but that meant he could not worry about appearances at this point.
“Government Award 699, Delivery Heaven 2 Hell. That summoner works as a courier in the Summoning Ceremony industry, so they specialize in transporting collector’s items like ancient documents and cursed diamonds. Their Awards are below yours, Onii-chan, but that’s because they’ve intentionally avoided conflict. You can’t underestimate them, okay?”
“I’ll be fine.”
“U-um, how can you say that when you don’t have a vessel partner and you just finished undergoing surgery for the 5 holes in your chest???”
“Compared to that hell, anything else looks like heaven.”

He was exactly right.
Only 120 seconds later, a delivery truck for an online store was lying on its side on the road.

Kyousuke ignored the surrounding commotion and circled to the back of the toppled truck.
He pried open the cargo door which had an odd abundance of analog locks for a delivery truck and he peered inside. The inside was blocked off by thick bars, so it almost looked like a cage. And he saw a familiar face inside.
“So we meet again, Biondetta.”
“Oh, dear. My, oh, my.”
It was a named summoner, just like Kyousuke.
It was one of the people who symbolized resurrection after returning from that white hell.
The waitress demon placed a hand over her mouth and voiced her blatantly feigned surprise. She was not wearing a prisoner’s uniform and she had not been stripped of all clothing, but not because of her captor’s kindness. It had been at his request.
“What do you need with me, my nemesis? Could you not contain your desire after our battle, so you came running back to torture me? Yes, yes, that sort of revenge isn’t bad either!!”
He truly could not understand why she placed her hands on her cheeks with a spellbound look in her eyes, but that was just how twisted she had grown. As long as she could lose herself in revenge, she would smile even as her own body was destroyed, so he would have to continue this on those terms.
“Work with me, Biondetta.”
“To what end?”
“To defeat the White Queen.” Kyousuke bluntly stated the impossible. “Hell awaits you either way, but stick with me and you have at least a miniscule chance of surviving. You don’t want to be shipped off to the Colorful Museum. He wants to collect any and all rare items connected to the Summoning Ceremony, even if it’s a human being. As an important member of Government, he must have used his influence to acquire *you* while they waited to deal with you. Biondetta, *you* don’t intend to become a part of some pervert’s collection, do you?”
Biondetta looked puzzled.
And she spoke.
“Oh, I don’t mind that at all.”
“…”
“Newfound suffering and humiliation will only lead to more revenge and retribution. Yes, yes. If this leads to striking back at him, then it’s entirely fine with me. The more hopeless the situation, the more exciting it is when you strike back. Yes, a brand new world awaits me…!!”
Kyousuke sighed.
Normal negotiations and threats were useless with her.
And he could not stay here forever. He was not afraid of normal police or the mass media. Instead, it was possible the Colorful Museum would send out another team to take back this “rare item”.

“Biondetta, I’ve thrown out my pride, so could you laugh your ass off at what I’m about to say?”
“You understand who I am, don’t you? As a contract demon, why would I ever even crack a smile at anything other than revenge???”
“That’s fine,” declared Kyousuke.
The younger brother continued as the older sister looked confused.
“I’m asking you to assist me with my revenge, Biondetta.”
Silly laughter burst from Biondetta.
She had not expected this at all.
She rolled on the floor in laughter for more than 5 seconds.
“Ha ha! Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!! Is that so? Is that so? So you are my next client. I never thought my nemesis would become my client! Heh heh. Who could have predicted this!? Ah hah hah hah hah hah!!!!!!”
“Biondetta, I know I asked for it, but that’s going too far. I can see your panties.”
“Look as much as you want!! After all, you are now my one and only beloved client! And our target is the White Queen? If it means enjoying history’s greatest revenge for a single millimeter longer or a single drop more, I am more than willing to throw this body your way a few times!!”
What would Isabelle or Murasame Kuina have thought if they could see this?
Would they have slapped him out of concern? Or would they have kept their distance out of disgust?
He had made a contract with a demon.
He had sold his soul.
He knew that. He knew it all too well.
But he had come across a goal that required that.
He broke the door of the cage as he spoke.
“With that settled, let’s get away from here. Pursuit should arrive before long.”
“True enough. But where will we be going first?”
“First, I want to make sure I have full use of Biondetta Shiroyama as a fighting force.”
“Be more specific, my beloved client.”
“Let’s go crush that Colorful Museum. I hate powerful people who do nothing but spread tragedy for their own greed.”
“Bff. Ah hah hah hah hah hah!!!!!!”
They were attacking rather than escaping.
They would run through the hidden side of the world to reach the next horrific battlefield.
Now that he had the impurity to go along with his purity, the summoner was climbing to the next stage.

A similar action was also underway.

“Oh, my.”
There was a summer resort deep in the mountains. It was a human museum that imprisoned its exhibits in what looked like a villa. A girl spoke elegantly in one of its underground rooms.
She was Azalea Magentarain.
She had once been Government Award 930, Golden Luxury. And she was currently part of the collection belonging to the vulgar old man known as Colorful Museum. That man did not defile or polish his collection. He simply enjoyed the act of collecting. And to fulfill that desire, he had imprisoned the girl with blonde ringlet curls and promptly lost interest in her.
“I don’t receive many visitors here. And you don’t seem to be another collector’s item either.”
“I am Government Award 666, The Saint.”
She was answered by a nun with a small boy by her side.
That summoner was famous for settling everything with the archangels of a certain monotheistic religion while ignoring Cost and Sound Range issues. That meant she was a high-speed summoner who would crush her opponent before they could rise to the Unexplored-class.
The Summoning Ceremony allowed the free usage of beings from all legends and beyond, so restricting oneself to a single religion was difficult. But she had done so and had lived on to this day within the harsh world of battle.
Her upper mid-level number of Awards was another restriction she placed on herself. Her actual skill had to be much higher.
Azalea did not even stand from the rocking chair in front of the heater. And she asked a question.
“So are you here to execute me for abandoning the three major powers and kneeling before Her Majesty?”
Small sounds much like small insects clicking their mandibles together came from all over the room.
The sound surrounded the nun, but what did it mean, where was it coming from, and how many noises was it in all? Nothing was certain.
Azalea was a summoner at the 900 level by Government’s former reckoning, but she was also a skilled weapons designer that supported Quad Motors, the world’s largest defense company that primarily worked with Repliglass. And she had learned something from her battles.
A Summoning Ceremony battle began before the Materials were summoned.
She knew you could sink into a pool of blood before even pulling out an Incense Grenade.
“No.”
But the devout nun shook her head.
In fact, she pulled off and threw away her veil of deep faith.

“Those who intend to harm Her Majesty have resumed activity below the surface. Thus, I was hoping you would help punish them for their irreverence.”
“Pff.”
Azalea burst out laughing.
The nun did not seem to understand why the girl was laughing.
“What is so funny?”
“Oh, excuse me. That was rude of me, wasn’t it? Sorry about that. So it all comes back to Her Majesty. I have underestimated her yet again.”
Even at that level, the Queen could melt them.
The Saint would not have been a traitor to begin with. She would have been a summoner with the pure and unadulterated heart that her name suggested. And yet she had been melted. Her iron will and steel resolve had meant nothing and her mind had succumbed and kneeled before the ultimate white.
It was the same as with Golden Luxury.
“What am I to do about a vessel?”
“Fractal Leskins was stored elsewhere *in order to prevent you from ending your contract and thus prevent you from binding a new contract so easily*, but another group led by Doctor *S* has gone to rescue him. From what I hear, he is your butler. They should have him as early as nightfall.”
“Colorful Museum will probably make a fuss if I just leave. It might be a minor issue, but we can’t have anything holding us back when it involves Her Majesty. It’s about time we crushed that old man.”
“And that is why we are securing your vessel,” calmly replied the nun with emotionless eyes. “And one other thing.”
“?”
“It seems another group entirely also intends to attack the Colorful Museum. We might just run into that irreverent group sooner than you might think.”

Azalea could think of only one possibility.
Only one person could face that Queen head-on without breaking. Or perhaps it was that he had the tenacity to get back up again even when he did break.
That summoner had the conflicting Awards of Loved by the White and White Slayer.
She hated him more than anyone and envied him more than anyone.
And that boy's name was…
"Honestly, I'm looking forward to this, Shiroyama Kyousuke."
The person who met the greatest tragedy here may have been the Colorful Museum.
That night, that palace of greed was fiercely attacked from both sides and it collapsed into rubble almost too easily.

Facts

- The past experiences seen thus far were all vicarious experiences seen using the dream-manipulating power of the Yellow Gills of the Three.
- Kyousuke learned that the surviving White Queen was the one named Mary Ann.
- The Yellow Gills once pretended to be human and slipped into human society.
- Kyousuke rescued Biondetta while she was being transported and agreed to cooperate with her.
- A new faith group has grown around The Saint and Doctor S. Azalea Magentarain has joined them. And based on the S initial, a connection to the family name of the Miniature Garden's children is likely.
- Kyousuke and Azalea both destroyed the Colorful Museum as an initial battle to solidify their foundation.
- The counterattack is finally beginning. The counterattack against the absolutely undefeatable White Queen.

Afterword

“……”
“……”
(Postscript Open ??/?? ??:??)
Afterword

And that’s Volume 5!
This is Kamachi Kazuma.
I must like to do something different when I get to the 4th or 5th book because here we have a flashback story! (Look at Volume 5 of A Certain Magical Index or Heavy Object to see this tendency and how I deal with it. The Zashiki Warashi of Intellectual Village is an exception since I went a little crazy with every single volume, but I did still do a flashback story in Volume 4.)
Here, I focused on the Queen’s Miniature Garden which is heavily related to Kyousuke and the White Queen’s past. Figuring out how to put together a story when the reader knows it ends in destruction was a learning experience for me, so I’m excited and worried to see how you all liked it. The main characters were of course those two extraordinary ones, but there were also the other 14 siblings, the adults of the Miniature Garden, the hidden leaders of the three major powers, and Shigara Masami. I was trying to gather a solid enough group to show where Kyousuke’s personality came from. I especially tried to show their humanity in Stage 04, but I hope you felt some regret there as you thought, “I know they’re going to lose, but I still don’t want them to lose!!” or “If they had survived, the world wouldn’t have grown so twisted!!”

Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass are both known all over the world and the characters in this story said that everyone has probably read it since it’s a simple children’s story, but have you all ever actually read it? To be honest, I hadn’t when I was thinking of starting this series. So I read it for my job. And when I did, I liked it, but it really seemed to mess with my head! Do children see a world that lets them accept it like normal? If so, I’m shocked at how set in our ways we get without even noticing it.

You could call it a masterpiece that everyone has heard of but surprisingly few have actually read. When I think about it, there are an awful lot like that. For example, Frankenstein or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I know generally what kind of story they are and how they end, but I've never tried reading them beginning to end. Wh-what about all of you? Maybe I just had a poor education?
As for the White Queen in this story, I wrote her while hoping that I could give her the kind of charisma that would lead people to have a general idea of how dangerous she was even if they didn't know the story. That might be presumptuous of me, but I like to dream big.

Your main character can't shine without a powerful enemy.
That was the idea at the root of this, but which one will you support? Kyousuke who accepted what is right and rejected love, or the Queen who accepted love and rejected what is right? Either way, it is those positions that allow them to glare at each other from the same stage. I would be happy if that was the kind of relationship you imagined.

I give my thanks to my illustrator Ikawa Waki-san and my editors Miki-san, Onodera-san, and Anan-san. Lots of characters, special locations, extreme situations, and everyone is insane! This had to be about the most difficult story from an illustration perspective, so thank you for sticking with me.
And I give my thanks to the readers. I feel like reversing the timeline for a flashback story is something of a selfish move on the author's part (Because I intentionally omitted a bunch of the basic information that should have already been explained and used it as a separate novel). I am truly thankful you went along with that selfishness. Nothing would please me more than to hear that you enjoyed it.

And I will end this here.

But it is strange how much easier it is to make an insane character look courageous.
-Kamachi Kazuma

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Defeat the Queen.
Protect the Queen.
As those two sides battled, that pure white being smiled.
Humans never changed and everything was the same as back in the Miniature Garden, but that was exactly what made him so adorable. She was delighted to find enough remained for her to feel so nostalgic.
Somewhere and at some time, the White Queen brought her hands behind her back and slowly reminisced.
And then her eyes focused on reality.
She had only been looking at a single person from the very beginning.
“My name is Mary Ann. I am my brother’s sword and shield and I have been promised the love of the one who named me. So I will utterly destroy all who would harm him!!”
She had once made that oath.
No one’s name had been written in blood on a contract made of parchment, but the Queen still thought that was where it had all begun.
But…
Even so…
She had learned something right at the brink of annihilation. She had found a powerful, powerful cause worth protecting even if it meant violating a taboo. She had found a far too noble light that made her want to protect it even if that meant the destruction of the world.
That was why she was here.
She had singlehandedly won that hellish war, slaughtered everything and everyone, and protected that small life.
She had not cared if it meant her own annihilation.
And when he found her stained with so much blood, that boy had shaken his head.
Of course he had.
She had taken far too many lives for him to simply accept her love.
She understood that much.
Even as insane as she was, she had still walked by his side for a time.
She would not act like he was indebted to her.
She knew that boy would not hesitate to say she should have let him die.
But…

No matter what…
“All I want is you.”
That voice reached no one.
Mary Ann.
The boy had once given her that silly nickname and it was now hidden in her heart as she too made for the battlefield.

Notes and References

1. ↑ **Yosegi** is a traditional Japanese puzzle box made of wood.

Mitou Shoukan://Blood-Sign — Volume 05

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The Unexplored Summon://Blood-Sign

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